Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
Mailing address: 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON, L2W 1A1

CHRISTIAN COURIER
November 13, 2000 A Reformed Biweekly No.2651 $1.60

'I have rights': Book reviews ... p. 12

Election 2000 coverage, opinions ..... pp. 13-15

56th year of publication

Christian Peacemaker Teams 'get in the Way'

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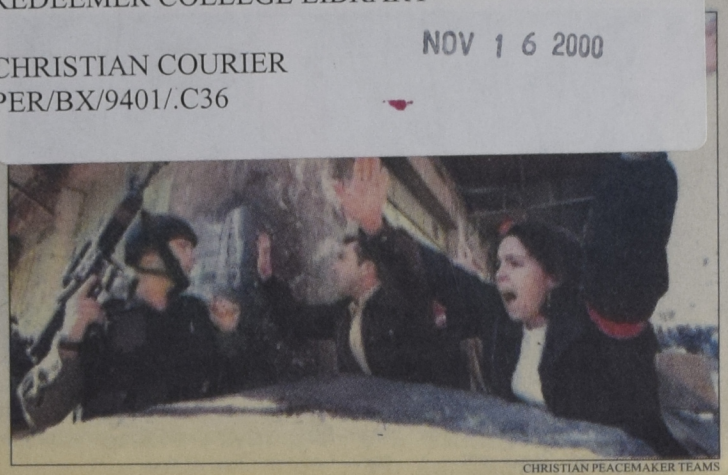
Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Getting in the way is what Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) do best. In fact, "Getting in the Way" is a motto for this group, which works actively at peacemaking. CPT Canada office co-ordinator Doug Pritchard explains that the motto means two things: "We get in the way physically, with our bodies, of violence"; but the group also strives to follow "Jesus' way of loving enemies and praying for those who persecute you."

Working in hotspots

Recently, CPT jumped into Canadian news headlines because of its intervention in the fishing conflict in Burnt Church, New Brunswick. But CPT workers and volunteers have been involved in many more hotspots around the world, including Israel, Bosnia, Chechnya, and the Mexican state of Chiapas.



CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS

Christian Peacemaker Teams member Sara Reschly (from Mount Pleasant, Iowa) 'gets in the way' of Israeli soldiers preparing to fire on peaceful Palestinian protestors in Hebron.

CPT was founded in 1986 by the Mennonite Church Canada and its sister denomination in the U.S., and by Church of the Brethren. "More recently, we've been joined by Friends United Meeting [the Quakers]," says Pritchard, who is a member of a Mennonite church in Toronto.

"We are a violence reduction initiative," he explains.

CPT's mission is to offer an organized, nonviolent alternative to war and other forms of lethal conflict, according to a brochure. It provides organizational support to people committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy. CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole church in conscientious objection to war and the development of skills and training for intervention in conflicts.

CPT uses three methods to accomplish its goals. One is: "To report on violence and human rights abuses we observe," says Pritchard. This is done through press releases and CPT's website, for instance. "A second way is to physically intervene with our own bodies," he says.

Risking lives in Hebron

Last year, some CPT workers risked their lives by "getting in the way" of violence in Hebron, Israel. Pritchard relates how a group of Muslims wanted to go to the tomb of Abraham, in Hebron, to pray. But the local Jews told them, "You're forbidden to do that during Ramadan."

CPT sent out some workers with the Muslims. "We knew this was going to be dangerous for them," says Pritchard. Suddenly, a group of armed Israeli soldiers ran out onto the street, but the CPT workers ran forward yelling, "This is a peaceful demonstration. Don't shoot!"

The Israeli soldiers "were very angry at our intervention" and arrested some CPT members.

See **PEACEMAKERS** *p. 2...*

Nigerian state to limit application of Islamic law

LAGOS, Nigeria (Newsroom) — While some northern states proceed with full implementation of Islamic law, officials in Kaduna, the site of bloody riots earlier this year, announced this month they intend to limit its application to predominantly Muslim areas.

Blaming sharia for ethnic violence

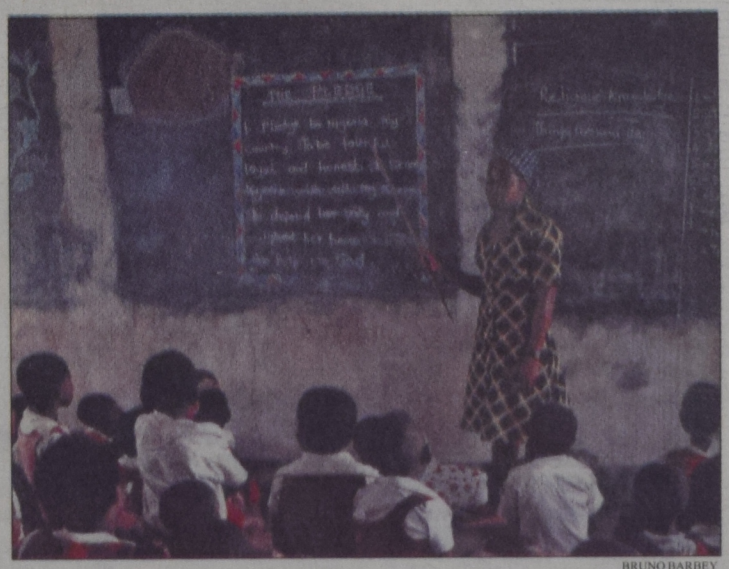
At the same time, some Christian leaders and political analysts are increasingly critical of President Olusegun Obasanjo's unwillingness to address what many Nigerians perceive as a fracturing of their year-old democracy. They blame sharia, in part, for the spate of ethnic violence that has plagued the president's administration since his inauguration in May 1999.

Last week, for example, ethnic clashes between Yorubas and Hausas — the two major tribes in Nigeria — rocked the nation's commercial centre of Lagos. Yorubas, who tend to be Christian and live in the south, and Hausas, who are largely Muslims from the north, have clashed over the enactment of sharia in northern states.

Hausas, who ran the country during much of the time since Nigeria achieved independence from Great Britain in 1960, also complain that they are marginalized under Obasanjo's government. Obasanjo, a Yoruba, describes himself as a born-again Christian.

Some observers see a connection between the spread of sharia and escalating ethnic violence. "There is a way the sharia controversy can be linked to the present clashes because the religious tensions have come to play in the confrontation between the Hausas and Yorubas," contended Kola Ojelabi, a Lagos-based journalist.

Ojelabi, a Yoruba who speaks Hausa, said he witnessed a Hausa Muslim prayer session last week during which participants prayed for the downfall of Obasanjo's government if he opposes sharia.



BRUNO BARBEY

Primary school students in Nigeria are taught the pledge of allegiance to their country.

"Some Yorubas heard the prayer, and this will definitely have increased the animosity among the two groups," Ojelabi said.

Deep-seated frustration

The Reverend Uba Ofei, national secretary of the Episcopal Committee for Justice, Development, and Peace, and of the Catholic Secretariat, said last week's skirmishes could be attributed to "deep-seated frustration with our social relations." He called for more decisive action to control the restlessness in the country.

Obasanjo maintains that the implementation of Islamic law poses no threat to the country, calling it "political Sharia" that will fizzle out. He insists that northern governors are adopting Sharia to win the support of their people, who soon will realize that their leaders have done nothing extraordinary.

Sharia has every potential to disturb peace in the country if not nipped in the bud, contends Mike Okonkwo, president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria

See **SHARIA** *page 2...*

News

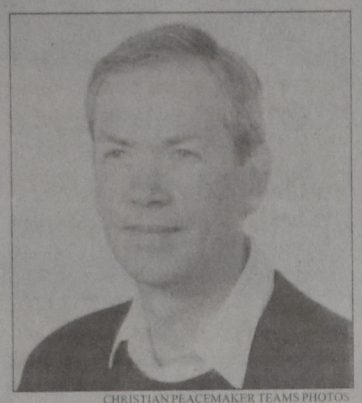
Peacemakers put their lives on the line

... continued from page 1

Later on, the Muslims prayed in the street and then dispersed.

"We were quite convinced on that day that our intervention saved lives," Pritchard contends.

A third approach CPT uses is "direct action," says Pritchard. An example of this was an intervention in Hebron, where Israel was demolishing the homes of Palestinians. "That's a real obstacle for peace," says Pritchard. "We have worked hard with Palestinians to resist that." CPT members showed their solidarity by joining Palestinians on the roofs of their homes.



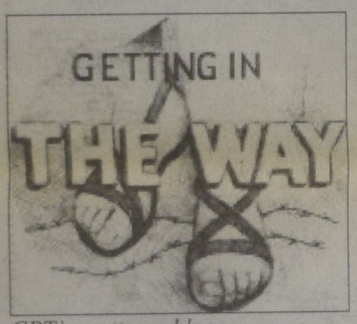
CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS PHOTOS

Doug Pritchard

Divine obedience

"What some call 'civil disobedience,' we call 'divine obedience,'" asserts Pritchard. "If that means breaking human laws, so be it."

Last April, the native community in Burnt Church, N.B. asked CPT members "to be present on their boats," reports Pritchard. CPT members, including Pritchard, joined Brian Bartibogue (a member of the First Nations Fisheries Commission) on his boat, on the opening day of this year's lobster fishing season. As he was setting out lobster traps, Bartibogue was immediately arrested by federal government fisheries officials.



CPT's motto and logo.

"They arrested all of us ... for obstruction," says Pritchard. "I didn't think I was breaking any laws — I still don't!"

Pritchard describes how fisheries officials "ran over boats.... They clubbed people in the water. Reporting on that abuse was important." The local natives "wanted us onboard to document those encounters," and were hopeful that the presence of CPT members would lessen the risk of people getting hurt.

Pritchard stresses that the aboriginal portion of the lobster fishery in Burnt Church "is quite tiny — one or two per cent. Their fishing is not a threat to the lobster stock."

'We're not neutral'

But in contrast, he asserts that the Fishery Department has "a very intimidating presence" there. "As a Canadian, I'm quite disturbed by my government's behavior. It's in conflict with the Supreme Court ruling." The Sept. 1999 ruling recognized that several native groups in New Brunswick have the right to fish commercially under a 1760 treaty.

But Pritchard notes, "we do meet with them [Fisheries workers] regularly. We try to be attentive to the truth of all parties. But we're not neutral." Pritchard has experienced polarized reactions from Fisheries workers. While sometimes "they're very angry and dismiss us ... at times, we've had cordial conversations with them."

Local fishermen in the area have been a third party in the ongoing conflict. Once, a local fisherman beat a CPT worker, and tore his notebook. "Our worker was saying, 'I'm a Catholic, you're a Catholic. Why are you doing this to me?'" reports Pritchard.

"The aboriginal community has terminated their fishery three weeks early," says Pritchard, but he observes, "That's peace, that's not justice." Six CPT members are remaining onsite in Burnt Church because "there are still some risks to the community," says Pritchard. "The issue is not resolved. The First Nations and the government have to resolve this."

Christian Peacemaker Team members Peggy Tiessen (of Leamington, Ont.) and Doug Pritchard (of Toronto) observe the lobster fishery from the shores on Miramichi Bay, N.B.

'Peacemaking,' not 'peacekeeping'

Pritchard draws a distinction between "peacemaking" and "peacekeeping."

"For Canadians, peacekeeping is seen in terms of a United Nations peacekeeping force," he says. "UN peacekeepers are lightly armed. Peacekeeping missions have become more aggressive.... Our peacemakers are unarmed. We're willing to take risks as unarmed people." CPT tries to follow the biblical command to "be wise as serpents and retain the innocence of a dove."

CPT currently has one office in Toronto and one in Chicago, with staff working in various hotspots around the globe. "We've been growing quite rapidly," says Pritchard.

Sharia has potential to disturb peace in Nigeria

... continued from page 1

(PAN). "If it violates the constitution, then it is illegal and should not be allowed in any form," he said.

Elder Saidu Dogo of the northern branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) agrees with Obasanjo's assessment. "It is a political sharia," he said. "Religious leaders should be allowed to handle religious matters, while political (leaders) should handle political matters. It is when they dabble into political matters that they cause problems."

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammed Merced, praised Obasanjo's neutrality in spite of calls on him to clamp down on states "legitimately expressing their constitutional rights."

State religion forbidden

Nigeria's constitution forbids adoption of a state religion. But it permits Islamic law in civil matters such as marriage and divorce. Full sharia, which has been adopted in nine northern states so far, includes criminal matters with penalties such as flogging, amputation, and beheading.

Merced, who also is president of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, said during a council meeting last week that the panel would continue to support the adoption of sharia and appealed to non-Muslims to seek legal redress if they feel threatened by it. He also pledged that the council would insist that non-Muslims are not subjected to sharia.

Gbemiga Ogunleye, editor of the Lagos-based *Punch* newspaper, said Obasanjo's position is wise because "he is dealing with a no-win situation." He agrees with the president's assessment that sharia "will fizzle out if the federal government does not take any hard stand on the matter but sustains its opposition against sharia."

"The kind of people we are dealing with are people on a suicidal mission," the Reverend Mathew Kukah, secretary-general of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, said in an interview with the Catholic Secretariat of *Nigeria Magazine*. "For them, death and life do not really mean anything. So there is little that could have been done without triggering off a reaction across the north, which nobody would have been able to control."

Don't fold arms and ignore sharia

Although he agrees that the Sharia will fizzle out with time, Pastor Bashir Ibeh of the Living Seeds Assembly in Lagos does not believe that the solution to the crisis over the controversial law is to " fold our arms" and ignore it. "Everybody knows that it is politically motivated and should therefore be tactically handled. I believe that in the power of God, with prayer, it would die out."

Despite pressure from Muslim groups that Kaduna adopt full-scale sharia like other northern states, Governor Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi maintains that the state should remain a secular one. "The state government shall not profess any particular religion," he said. Makarfi sent a bill to the state House of Assembly on October 11 to exempt predominantly Christian parts of the state from sharia. The bill has not yet been approved.

The controversy over the adoption of sharia in Kaduna state has twice resulted in religious clashes between Christians and Muslims with hundreds of persons killed and substantial property damage.

Kaduna has an almost even number of Christians and Muslims. Christians are in the majority in the southern part of the state, while Muslims dominate the north.

The proposed law in Kaduna provides for judicial reforms to accommodate divergent religious and socio-cultural practices of various communities. Sharia and customary courts would be established as needed to handle matters on basis of faith, norms, customs, and traditions. Islamic law would not be applied in predominantly Christian parts of the state.

Lateef Adegbite, secretary general of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, said the Kaduna governor's decision confirms that "sharia will not be applied for non-Muslims."

But Richard Akinola, chairman of the Center for Free Speech, argued that it may be difficult to ensure that Christians in Kaduna are not persecuted under sharia. When sharia was implemented in Zamfara, the first state to enact Islamic law, Christian women reported having to wait hours for a bus that transported women. Under sharia, men and women may not use the same public transportation.

"The government is to trying to satisfy both sides," Akinola said, "but given the known antics of some Muslim fundamentalists, a lot has to be done to ensure that the proposed law is complied with."

News

Christian agencies working to contain outbreak of deadly ebola virus

KAMPALA, Uganda (EP) — News of 81 diagnosed cases of the deadly Ebola virus in the Gulu district of Uganda has local people confused and terrified, reports World Vision.

People are frightened; they think the disease is caused by an evil spirit. They also don't know how to protect themselves," said Mark Avola, World Vision's coordinator in Gulu and member of the Ugandan government's Ebola task force. By Oct. 17 over 40 people had died in the recent outbreak.

The virus kills 90 percent of those infected. Fear of contamination has led authorities to outlaw traditional funerals and tighten border patrols to keep the outbreak from spreading to neighboring Kenya. "The most important thing is a high degree of alertness," Dr. Dominic Mutie, a disease control official with the World Health Organization, told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Surveillance at the border towns has been reinforced, including at our airports."

Sudden onset of fever

Ebola is spread through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids of infected person. The disease causes sudden onset of fever, weakness, muscle pain and sore throat. Rashes, internal and external bleeding, organ failure and death soon follow. No specific treatment exists for Ebola.

Since it was first identified in 1976, the disease has killed at least 800 people in Sudan, Zaire and elsewhere in Africa. World Vision reports that the death toll in this outbreak has the potential to be many times higher if Ebola spreads to densely populated areas of the district, home to 400,000 Ugandans.

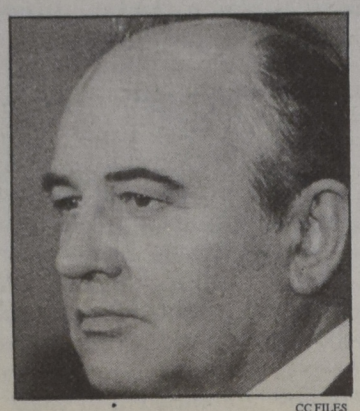
Christian aid agency World Vision, which has worked in the Gulu district for 12 years, is currently supplying local hospitals with intravenous supplies and protective gear for health workers and others in contact with those who have the highly contagious disease.

Gorbachev reminisces on Hour of Power

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. (Religion Today) — Mikhail Gorbachev talked with religious broadcaster Robert Schuller in a broadcast aired on Schuller's Hour of Power Oct. 22. The nearly 30 minute conversation was taped Oct. 15 before 4,500 people at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif.

The former Soviet leader called for peace and an end to world poverty. He said there was no winner in the Cold War since trillions of dollars were spent on weapons while most of the world's people were mired in poverty. Gorbachev has become a hero in the West for dismantling the Soviet system and bringing down the Berlin Wall.

Gorbachev reminisced about his modest beginnings. He talked about his mother's prayers and said that "practically all" of the people in his family were Christians. Gorbachev called the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church since the fall of communism "one of the most important gains of perestroika."



CC FILES

Mikhail Gorbachev

"We have to respect our people, and many of them are believers," he said. "There can be no freedom without spiritual freedom, without human beings being able to choose."

Schuller pressed Gorbachev to acknowledge that he is not an atheist, but Gorbachev would not do so. "I have lived a long and complicated life," he said. Later he said, "There will be a time when we will really talk about this with you."

The former Russian leader "calls himself an atheist, but 11 years ago, as one of the most powerful men in the world, God used this atheist in a mighty way," Schuller said.

Christian Palestinians fleeing Palestinian territory

JERUSALEM (EP) – Christian Arabs are leaving the Palestinian occupied territories in the Middle East in droves, reports the *Jerusalem Post*.

The sudden wave of immigration has been caused by the outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Christian Arabs have found themselves in the middle of this conflict that started in late September, reports the *Post*. Since the public call for violence against Christians and Israelis by a Muslim leader in Gaza, one Christian group has been attacked and several have been threatened. Homes belonging to Christian families have been taken over by Muslim Palestinians for use as military posts. Due to the increasing danger, Arab Christians have been leaving the area with help from foreign embassies. The embassies reported that a small number of the families leaving the area are of the Muslim faith as well.

"If the mercy of God is so great that He can instruct us, to our salvation, even when He hides Himself, what a brilliance of light we must expect when He reveals Himself!"

... Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Pensees

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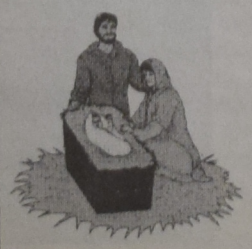

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Guest Editorial

Stress on moral values can undermine Christ in politics

John Hiemstra

Prime Minister Chretien urges Canadians to re-elect him as the defender of 'Trudeau values.' These are 'the values that made us what we are,' he claims. At the same time, religion is forcefully re-entering the public square and Christians are vigorously promoting moral values.

What is the meaning of this moment in history?

The secular media characterizes this election as a 'vision war.' *The Globe and Mail*'s internet poll recently asked: "Do you agree this election will be centred on two competing visions of Canada?" Supposedly, we are expected to choose between 'liberal values' and 'conservative values.'

The poll's next question fortunately offers a better question: "If not, then what is this election about for you?" Without equivocation, I say this election is about Jesus!

"That's a Christianly-correct answer," you might reply, "fits right in with WWJD. But the politics of Jesus will surely push us back into theocracy where governments coerced citizens into the 'true faith' and 'correct morals'!" This fear has led many Christians to conclude that this moment in history requires a scaled down Jesus and a moralistic politics.

Domesticating Jesus

In this election campaign, some Christians reduce Jesus to family values, others confine him to personal and private ethics. Some permit Jesus to influence ethical issues, e.g. abortion, capital punishment, prostitution, euthanasia, and homosexuality. Some put Jesus in a rationalistic straight jacket by opting for Judeo-Christian morals, while others synthesize him with secular liberal, conservative, socialist or nationalist values.

I don't doubt these brothers and sisters sincerely want to escape secularism and pragmatism. I'm sure they want Jesus to be relevant to their politics. Yet, moralism tends to domesticate Jesus, that is, place him alongside of, or even subordinate to, other concerns. It squanders this historic opportunity we have been given to articulate the public meaning of the Gospel.

The cosmic Christ

The Apostle Paul proclaims the cosmic Christ in his letter to the Colossians: "For by him *all things* were created... he is before *all things*, and in him *all things* hold together." "He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in *everything* he might have the supremacy."

Through the cross, God "reconciles *all things* to himself" (Col. 1:15-23). The universal importance of Jesus is central to the Gospel (see Luke 1:30-33, 1:46-55, 4:16-20; Matt. 28:16-20, John 1:1-5, Romans 8:18-39, 11:36; 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Eph. 1:10, Rev. 4:1-11, and Rev. 20-22).

In response to this Good News, we should not engage in politics simply to make people moral, implement a Christian worldview, or practice Christian principles. Instead, these items must each be rooted directly in our faith. Christ is the source of the entire creation, the one who redeems, reconciles and renews all things, including our national and political life.

The entire range of issues in this election falls under King Jesus' rule. He offers a *new start* for homeless refugees, imperiled unborn, debt-laden countries, victims of crime, degraded ecosystems, demeaned prostitutes, and devalued dying. Jesus is *good news* for all hurt, oppressed, sin-laden, down-trodden, and rejected creatures. He is the *creational solid ground* and *redemptive hope* for responsible investing, parenting, social work, farming, computer programming, and marriage. Jesus is the only hope for true justice in a fallen world.

Recycling theocracy

The politics of cosmic Jesus, however, does resurrect the spectre of theocracy. A small minority of Christians insist the Bible requires theocracy and push for state regulated morality. Others try to avoid theocracy in several ways.

Across the political spectrum, some Christians try to privatize religious and moral questions while using neutral reason for public matters. Issues like abortion and euthanasia may involve Jesus, they argue, but only if they are decided personally and privately. Public issues like technology or tax-cuts are considered merely neutral and therefore exclude Jesus.

Populism claims to offer a new solution to theocracy that is gaining widespread support. To avoid privatizing morality, populists propose we hold public referendums on contentious moral issues. To avoid theocratic coercion, they want to impose only those morals that are voluntarily adopted by the majority through referendums. This solution fails, however, because it subjects Jesus to majority rule and allows government too much latitude to legislate in non-public areas of life.

I am not convinced we need to domesticate Jesus in order to ensure tolerance! There is a non-compromising, biblically-consistent way to avoid theocracy.

A public justice approach

The Bible does not call *all* people to be responsible for *all* morality at *all* times. Different people and institutions have different callings from God. While everyone is called to "let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (Amos 5:21-24), for example, parents answer to God for justice in family relations, businesses in pay scales, and teachers for resolving classroom conflicts. The state is not competent to enact justice in every corner of our lives. Its task is limited to public justice, that is, legally integrating persons, communities and institutions within society.

Governments should overlook some sins! Not because politicians should encourage godlessness, nor because these sins do not matter, but because they are not the *direct* responsibility of government. Furthermore, the Bible reminds us that Christians and our governments live under the patient rule of God (2 Peter 3:9), who bids us live peaceably with unbelievers (Matt. 13:25), and even calls us to love enemies and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27).

Seeking a balance

This perspective on the cosmic Christ and limited role of government keeps us from imposing utopian dreams. It also prevents us from paring down government's role simply to preventing oppression in society. Public justice also involves positive tasks like rebuilding distorted societal relationships, providing services that are absent or failing, and restoring persons and institutions to their proper callings when displaced by others.

If Christ returns November 27th, pray he finds us grappling with the 'politics of the cosmic Jesus' rather than uncritically embracing 'liberal or conservative values.'

John Hiemstra is Associate Professor of Political Studies at The King's University College in Edmonton.

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to: report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective; provide contact for the Christian community.

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Publications Mail Registration No. 09375

Opinion

The truth of politics

Harry der Nederlanden

Politics is so vexing – for me at least. It forces me to choose. Often among alternatives I don't like. Most folk who have been nurtured on good sermons develop a reflective frame of mind. They prefer to turn matters over and over in an effort to understand from more than one side. Politics puts an end to that process; it forces us to choose. Sometimes unnecessarily and often between false alternatives.

When I listen to political rhetoric, sometimes I feel like a patient who is told, "You're overweight: Dr. Rightwell recommends pulling all your teeth and Dr. Leanleft wants to staple your stomach shut." As I'm being prepped for the big operation, I want to shout, "But couldn't I just skip my nightly chocolate pudding?" During elections, parties seem inclined to put dramatic choices before us. When it comes to implementation, however, that's another matter. But perhaps that's a matter less for complaint than for gratitude.

As Bill Blaikie pointed out in our last issue, conservatism sees the market as a realm ruled by impersonal laws. Human beings are not responsible for or to them; they operate in the background like gravity, keeping us from flying off into the blue (as the Germans put it: *ins Blaue hinein).*

Law of God for humans not like gravity

But we know the law of God for human beings is not like gravity, a stupid force: it calls forth and stimulates our human responsibility and creativity; it does not take it away.

Socialism, on the other hand, tends to assume that civil society and the market have no soul, no ethical direction, unless they are possessed by the Spirit of the state. The collective mind, a single, all-ruling purpose and power, must animate every institution to give them a common moral direction. Businesses, schools, industries, even science and the arts, are amoral and selfish unless the state keeps prodding them toward serving the well-being of the whole.

But we've learned — the hard way — that the collective Spirit that presumes to speak for the whole veers steeply toward corruption and violence.

In politics, reflective Christians have rightly (and leftly) said: "A plague on both your houses!" Both make sense of society and of our responsibility by over-simplifying.

God's creation rich and various

But God's creation is rich and various, and as we respond to it and to the promptings of the Spirit, human culture and society seem to become ever more complex and various. The different ways and different arenas in which we can serve God and one another in this world just keep on multiplying in modern society.

This diversity often looks like anarchy. We are tempted to assert some order over this seeming chaos by force of will, by imposing some simple formula or program to co-ordinate all that's going on. For isn't it so that truth is one? There must be some formula for setting things right.

Feeding issues into the Polarizer

Under the pressure of party politics and campaigning, one issue after another gets fed into the Polarizer. One party depicts itself as the defender of everyman and paints the other as the party of the elite. Another party vaunts itself as the rescuer of the poor. exploited taxpayer and pillories the opposition as the coddler of the undeserving.

Whatever arouses the public's passions or fears is fodder for the great Polarizer. Regardless of the fact that crime in Canada has been decreasing for almost a decade. people are anxious, so getting tougher on crime becomes important. A year ago all parties were hammering on the importance of reducing the public debt, but suddenly tax cuts are more popular, so the old issue gets put on hold. That's politics.

An exercise in humiliation

Yes, politics is an exercise in humiliation – self-humiliation. It shows us for the fools we are. It also makes us aware how badly we fail in all our efforts not just to *embody* love and justice, harmony and truth, equity and peace, but how difficult it is to even *say* what such a social order should be. Our leaders (for that is what politicians should be) cannot seem to inspire or galvanize us. They constantly disappoint. I'm not just talking about their failure to keep promises in the end. Even here at the beginning, in the starting gate, they disappoint.

Truth is cut up like a pizza. Each party runs off with a piece, crowing that it has the whole thing. Some pieces are trampled underfoot. Different interests have to be catered to. Some issues are too hot to touch. Others can be addressed only with politically correct slogans.

Where is truth in all this? No wonder that the only time we mention politics and truth in one breath is to contrast them.

Thomas More: patron saint of politicians

Recently Pope John Paul proclaimed Thomas More the patron saint of politicians. More was chosen because he was a man of integrity who stuck to his principles even when threatened by death. He refused to sacrifice truth to politics; he refused to say that King Henry's marriage was not a marriage.

Would that all political judgments were so clear-cut. Would that Christian politics amounted to nothing more than being principial and speaking the truth. So many of us Christians are vexed by politics and become so disillusioned with it that we avoid it because choices are seldom as clear-cut as the one faced by Thomas More. In the political realm truth becomes elusive. divided scattered, with each party staking claim to a little bit of it.

To preserve his integrity, Thomas More actually chose to retire from politics. In fact, in his preface to Utopia, he pictures a life of contemplation as much the better way. I've often felt a kinship with him. Politics often

COURTESY OF THE FRICK COLLECTION

Sir Thomas More, from the painting by Holbein.

seems to demand compromise more than truth.

But maybe there's something wrong with the way we envision truth. We think of it as that which stands above the fray, unified, pure and stable. Politics, on the other hand, is the arena of partisanship, half-truths, accommodation, compromise, fuzzifying and popular slogans.

God's truth is one

There's some warrant for this, for God's truth is one: all reality has its origin in him, and all our making and doing have their purpose in him. However, precisely because this is so, Christian believers know they don't need to establish a source of unity and meaning on this side of heaven. They admit they cannot pull all the parts together and encompass the swarming diversity of things by dint of their own thinking and organizing. They entrust that superhuman task to God.

This doesn't mean we consign truth to heaven and content ourselves with practicality and common sense. God has revealed himself to us and thereby also what we ourselves are, and he has done so in words, in a book. The only way we get to know him is by becoming part of a community of readers and interpreters. We rely not only on God but also on fellow believers. Truth enters the fabric of human life as something that has been bandied about, chewed over, passed on from hand to hand.

Every reader comes away from the Word with his own private insights; yet, he becomes part of a church, a community, a people. He sets aside some of his private interpretations, accepts the teachings of others, revises what he believes, and accommodates his opinions to worship and work with others with different understandings. Every single institution and organization is a political and an ecumenical enterprise.

Truth, God's truth, does not allow us to live in splendid isolation, as if integrity means keeping the truth we have grasped pure and untarnished. God's truth is summed up in the love commandment. God's truth is summed up in Jesus Christ, who gave his life for others and who entrusted his message to obtuse disciples and a divided church. God's truth thrusts us into community.

Politics, as that messy process by which we learn to live and work together on the basis of partial and often partisan insights, is married to truth right from the beginning. Wherever people seek to work together for common ends there is politics. Through political interaction, people who differ find ways to weave something of what they have understood of truth into the fabric of their life together. We succeed, not when we have come up with a blueprint of reality, a program to end all programs, but when God blesses the work of those who hear and do his truth.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.
Canada mail: Publications Mail Registration No. 09375. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.
U.S. mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY, 14092.

Subcriptions: (effective Jan. 1, 1999)	**Canada** (G.S.T. incl.)	**U.S.A.** (G.S.T. free)
one year (26 issues)	$39.54	$31.60 (US)
two years (52 issues)	$75.00	$60.00 (US)

overseas one year $80.00 surface mail
Advertising deadlines: display advertising: Tuesday, 8:30 a.m. (9 business days before publication date); classified advertising: Tuesday, 8:30 a.m. (9 business days before publication date). See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available. (ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1. Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838, or fax: 905-682-8313, e-mail: subscriptions: ccsubscrip@aol.com, advertising: ccadpromo@aol.com

PRINTED IN CANADA

Arts/Media

A pile of Canadian stones

Ron VandenBurg

Canada: A People's History premiered Oct. 22 and has become the CBC's most expensive Canadian television documentary. It is unique in that it will be one story communicated to both English and French Canada.

Nine two-hour episodes will be shown this fall with seven to follow next season. But it's not the $30 million dollar budget, the wide screen digital cameras, or the sixteen directors that have caused the biggest problem for the production. The biggest problem is to convince Canadian viewers that there is such a thing as a Canadian history, an epic tale that can be told to all Canadians.

History taught regionally

Across our country Canadian history is taught regionally. The clearest example of this would be the nation's history taught in Ontario schools as compared to the version of Quebec schools. How differently do the Quebec classrooms view James Wolfe or Louis Riel? Recent events, too, have shown us that Quebeckers continue to struggle with the legacy of their own native son Trudeau.

Others, too, put on their perspective glasses. The voices of First Nations people, the West, Atlantic Canada, women, or immigrants – all ask to be heard. Each with important, valid stories to tell.

Which stories to tell?

First executive producer Mark Starowicz had to decide whether or not there is a Canadian national story to tell and then he had to define it. What is that story? Starowicz says the story of Canada is its growth into a united nation of peoples. The stories he chooses will tell us more about ourselves as a nation than it will tell us about the past. The stories of Native genocide, the seigneurial system, the political dealings for Confederation, the Roaring '20's or the Japanese internment of WWII? Which stories do you tell and how much time to give each story? The monuments we erect, the chapters of a history textbook and this series all show what we today see as important.

A photo montage from the website of Canada: A People's History.

Second, he has called the series *A People's History*. Starowicz needs to choose which voices will define our history. All storytellers and news reporters need to choose their main characters, setting, plot and most importantly their theme. From what perspective did Starowicz choose his stories?

In a recent interview, Starowicz explained, "It's all a question of finding the right narrative arc to fit all the different stories into. Once you've found the theme of the episode, then you fit the elements to that." Some main strands he plans to include in each episode include aboriginal issues, gender, class and region. He may find that trying to include all these voices may muddle the end goal of the big picture for the series.

A national family table

Right now, it is too early to tell what Starowicz has in store, and I'm not sure it matters what perspective or agenda he and his team have. By making *Canada: A People's History*, the CBC has created a national family table where we can all sit. Here is the oppor- tunity for a national dialogue about what our nation- al story is. Hopefully it will be more than a cacophony of yelling voices. The title alone points to an attempt at unifying the separate stories that develop only enclaves of regionalism and thematic perspective.

Canada: A People's History uses first-person accounts. Using the personal stories found in diaries and journals of people who lived in the past, actor monologues frame the stories, making them come alive for the viewers. This kind of talking head is a welcome change from that of the academic informing the viewer of the significance of what they just saw. Now the story stands alone. The universal themes of love, hope, war and loss will speak to all people regardless of their point of view.

God calls us to remember the past

Whether it's a film series, a monument, or a pile of stones beside a river, God calls us to remember the past. It is here that we as Christians and Canadians should start with the series. First, we need to use this opportunity as a way to really listen to the voices at the table. We need to discern without being critical, not using discernment as a weapon. We also need to celebrate our country and see that God has put us here at this time and at this place for a reason. Therefore we need to take the gifts of the past, enjoy them and see how God has spoken to us in love.

We also need to see that healing be done. God has also spoken to us in warning and in judgment. The past generations have also given to us their burdens. We must choose whether to silence the hurting voices at the table or whether to create opportunities for restoration. Most importantly, sitting at the national table, we can listen to what God's calling is for us as a nation.

So pull up a chair and listen.

A scene from Canada: A People's History: *Iroquois warriors on the attack in Lachine, Quebec, in 1689.*

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The Sopranos: A glimpse at future of TV?

Ron DeBoer

During the CBC's broadcast of the Olympics back in September, CTV aired an uncut, adult television program called *The Sopranos*, previously seen only on HBO, a pay-per-view cable channel. Loaded with profanities, nudity, and graphic violence, *The Sopranos* was hugely successful drawing far more viewers than the Olympic games on CBC.

The Sopranos, which follows the lives of an offbeat New Jersey Mob family, stars James Gandolfini, who plays Tony Soprano, the mob boss who must juggle soccer practices, contract killers, a mistress, the side effects of Prozac, FBI agents, and appointments with his psychiatrist.

Gauging tolerance level

CTV aired all 13 episodes during the two week Olympic stint. Many believe CTV is gauging the Canadian public's tolerance level; if little resistance is felt, we're sure to see The Sopranos on network television sometime next year. Apparently, we Canadians are a tolerant bunch. Some 2.1 million of us tuned in nightly to *The Sopranos*, which aired at 10:00 p.m. Of the few dozen complaints CTV received, over half were upset that the show had run until quarter past eleven; they had set their VCRs to stop taping at 11:00 p.m.

But Winnipeg's Italian-Canadian League was one group that voiced their disapproval of stereotyping Italians as gangsters. While president Vincent De Luca didn't get anywhere when he tried to block CTV from running *The Sopranos*, his next step was to take aim at the advertisers running their ads during the show. None of the show's sponsors pulled their ads.

While *The Sopranos* is more graphic on all fronts than most R-rated movies, critics have hailed its characterization, story-telling and analysis of the human condition. The show presents interesting issues of moral relativism, and the huge gray areas between good and evil behavior.

One episode contrasted the characters of the mob family with a group of rich, elitist businessmen whose shady dealings on the stock market are discussed at private golf clubs. One of the show's recurring themes is that the evil deeds by members of the mob family aren't that different from the "acceptable" behavior by normal citizens who bask in their own self-righteousness. The content of the show is ugly, but *The Sopranos* exposes valuable truths about all of us.

Father Phil, a Catholic priest ministering to the Soprano family, represents this irony perfectly. While Father Phil claims to be a man of God and constantly denounces the sins of the Sopranos, he enjoys the gifts and money that comes his way even though he knows what he is receiving is stolen, illegal or obtained under suspicious circumstances. Unfortunately, while Father Phil could attempt to be the moral voice of the show, his hypocrisy is what is highlighted.

Despite its excellent themes, intelligent writing and compelling plots, I can't endorse *The Sopranos*. The steady onslaught of profanity, sex, and cold-blooded murder, while realistic and necessary to tell the story of the mob, is not content that acknowledges God or teaches me anything. Therefore, if what I'm getting from this show is purely entertainment, then my motives are suspect. The show glorifies lying, cheating, and unfaithfulness in characters we, the viewers, are supposed to admire.

Symptom of larger sickness

The sad reality is that *The Sopranos* is merely a symptom of a larger sickness of violence, coarse language and sex that is pervading network television. Nightly dramas are pushing the envelope further each year, so that what was once considered — even to non-Christians — as taboo, is now normal. *Sex in the City*, *Red Show Diaries*, and *SexTelevision*, now shown weekly on City TV, are being lauded as ground-breaking, the creators as pioneers. Sex, violence, and death have become marketing tools to gather large audiences.

What can you do? Like the Italian-Canadian League of Manitoba, you can make your voice be heard. Christians can make a difference in the media. Networks consider every complaint they get as representing 1,000 viewers. Make the call, send the e-mail, write a letter and voice your opinion about programming.

And don't just complain. Communicate your pleasure with quality programs like *Seventh Heaven* and *West Wing*. We need to keep the good shows on the air and let the powers-that-be hear our displeasure with programming that compromises our beliefs and values. If audiences can put shows on the air, audiences can take them off, too!

Hollywood needs 'missionaries'

Jim L. Wilson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP) — Christian writers are needed to bring the arts back to the church and to send missionaries to Hollywood, Barbara Nicolosi told participants in the fourth annual Christian Writers' Conference, Oct. 17-21 at Glorieta, a LifeWay Conference Center in New Mexico

Nicolosi is director of "Act One," a Hollywood-based organization that encourages and trains Christian writers to impact the contemporary culture.

"The 20th century was unique in human history because it was the only century in which the arts and faith were separated and antagonistic," she maintained. Bringing the arts back to the church, she said, will benefit the church. "A beautiful piece of art can stir people inside for something they don't even know. It can make them lonely for heaven."

The church needs the arts, she continued, but the arts also need the church. "Art without faith can only talk in certainty about one thing: darkness," Nicolosi said. "Twentieth-century art had an obsession with the dark side of human nature." The church can correct the dark tendencies of art because faith will bring hope to the arts, she said.

She urged the church to try to study Hollywood's culture instead of just criticizing it.

"Missions begins when we go to them and listen," she said. "We go, we look and we see how the Spirit of God is preparing the way for the Word. We affirm what is good, we build on it and then we share what we have.

"The easiest thing to do is condemn," Nicolosi said. Because of the church's constant criticism, Hollywood will "perceive us as brain-numb naysayers."

Instead of being disgusted by what comes out of Hollywood, Nicolosi suggested that Christians pray for the culture and for missionaries to Hollywood.

Nicolosi urged conference participants to encourage young people to pursue the arts and become missionaries. "Beg them to be writers, artists, poets and filmmakers. If we don't get good Christian kids in the acting profession, we'll never have good Christian role models in Hollywood."

Major corporations peddle porn

(Religion Today) — Some of the most recognizable mainstream corporations are getting involved in the pornography business. General Motors, the world's largest company, now sells more graphic sex films through its DirecTV subsidiary than does Hustler pornographer Larry Flynt, according to distributors of the films, *The New York Times* reported.

EchoStar Communications Corp., the No. 2 satellite provider, makes more money selling sex films than Playboy does with its magazines, cable, and Internet businesses, records from the companies show.

AT&T Corp. the nation's largest communications company, runs a sex channel called Hot Network to subscribers of its broadband cable service, and owns a company that provides sex videos to nearly a million hotel rooms, the newspaper reported.

Other companies selling the kind of X-rated fare that used to be seen mostly in adults-only theatres include Time Warner, Liberty Media, Marriott International, On Command, LodgeNet Entertainment, and the News Corporation, the *Times* reported. The companies don't market the products much, and mention them only in vague euphemisms in their annual reports. Board members of these companies are "among the American business elite."

New technology, anonymity expand porn business

New technology that brought anonymity to customers has vastly expanded the pornography business. Years ago, a person would have to venture into a seedy part of town to find hard-core films or bookstores, which frequently were raided by police, further adding to the risk of shame or arrest.

The introduction of the videocassette recorder in 1975 by the Sony Corp. changed everything. Within 10 years, 75 per cent of American homes owned a VCR, and once entertainment moved from theatres to the privacy of the home, the industry changed radically. Twenty per cent of American homes with a VCR or cable access now pay to watch explicit sex, the *Times* reported, and 10,000 adult movies are made every year, according to a survey.

Pay-per-view television and the Internet removed the final barriers to shame, making pornography easier to order than pizza. Selling sex films in hotel rooms, homes, and online has become a $10 billion industry, according to Forrester Research of Cambridge, Mass. Thirty years ago, the value of hard-core pornography in the United States was between $5 million and $10 million, according to a federal government study.

About 1.5 million hotel rooms, 40 per cent of all rooms in the country, are equipped with television boxes that sell X-rated fare, and half of all guests buy the movies, generating $190 million in sales a year, according to estimates by the hotel industry.

At home, Americans buy or rent $4 billion a year worth of graphic sex videos from retail stores and spend an additional $800 million in less-explicit sex films, according to trade organizations that track such things. Sex videos comprise 32 per cent of the business for general-interest video retailers that carry X-rated films.

About one in four regular Internet users, or 21 million Americans, visits one of the more than 60,000 sex sites on the Web at least once a month, according to two Internet rating services. The sites generate about $1 billion a year for credit card companies, search engines, and people who build Web sites.

Religious and civic groups have castigated companies such as AT&T, which offers the hard-core Hot Network to its 2.2 million digital cable subscribers. "I don't think many people understand what it means to take away the barriers to this kind of material, such as AT&T is doing," said Mark Regier, who manages a mutual fund for members of the Mennonite faith.

Only one small chain, the Omni Hotels, chose to remove the sex films, and received phone calls and letters of thanks from 50,000 people as a result.

Church

Pray for the persecuted church, agencies urge Christians

Alan Doerksen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — More than 200 million Christians now face intense persecution for their faith, and another 250 million undergo some form of discrimination, especially from communist governments and Islamic regimes, according to Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). Because of such persecution, November 12 has been named this year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

VOM has issued prayer guides and other resources to help Christians remember and pray for their spiritual brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith. To promote the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, VOM has been working with Open Doors with Brother Andrew, the Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the World Evangelical Followship.

Prayer: the most we can do

"Prayer is the most necessary action, the greatest gift, the hardest spiritual labor, as well as the simplest cry of a loving heart," states VOM's prayer guide. "The time that you spend in prayer has an eternal impact on the lives of men and women throughout our world. Through prayer, our world is changed, closed doors are opened, resistant people are made receptive, leaders are put down and raised up, and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is extended.

"Whenever Christians meet, whether two or three, hundreds or thousands, they are always one. When they suffer, Christ suffers. To forget the martyrs is to forget the Lord, because suffering Christians are not separate from Christ himself. Let us, therefore, when we pray, remember to include our sisters and brothers around the world who are suffering in Christ's name."

As VOM explains, persecuted Christians "suffer extreme physical torture, spirit-draining psychological abuse, and the unspeakable pain of being separated from family members. Yet the most common request of persecuted Christians is simply for our prayers.

"As Christians living free and enjoying abundant blessings, the least we can do is pray for our suffering brothers and sisters. Praying is also the most we can do. Because we know that prayer in faith is mightier than any earthly force or deed."

Ways to pray

VOM suggests several ways to pray for suffering Christians:

- as individuals, as part of a daily personal quiet time, or at a specific time each week apart from devotionais;
- as families;
- with a group, such as men's prayer breakfasts or women's coffee groups;
- as a local church, for instance at a missions prayer meeting.

VOM also mentions specific things for Christians to pray about related to suffering Christians, such as mission workers who risk their jobs, families and even their lives to get Christian literature and help to persecuted Christians. Christians can also pray for individuals such as pastors and evangelists who are beaten and imprisoned for their witness, and who leave behind families who have to fend for themselves.

Pray for persecutors

Christians should pray for persecutors, too, suggests VOM: "pray for the men and women that torture Christians. Pray for the brutal prison guards. Pray for the conversion of the corrupt judiciary in communist, totalitarian and other countries.

"We can hate Muslims and communists, and slander their religion and philosophies — or we can seek to win them to Jesus Christ. Pray that the Lord will see fit to save all who persecute his church."

VOM also advises Christians to pray for the leaders of countries such as China, that they will repent and turn to Jesus. "Whole nations can be changed when a leader is saved," states VOM's prayer guide. "Pray that the strongholds will be overthrown in each country, and that the light of God's glory will break through."

Millions of Asians displaced by floods

(Religion Today) — Churches and relief agencies are responding to Southeast Asia's worst flooding in more than 50 years.

The catastrophe is destroying lives and communities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. The monsoon season hit early this summer, bringing an unexpected amount of rain, months of rising rivers, and devastating floods, Charles Moon, Asia regional director for World Relief, told Religion Today.

Five million homeless

About five million people are homeless, according to news reports. Close to a million people lost their homes in Vietnam, at least 500,000 are displaced in Cambodia, and a half million are camped out on roads or living in temporary facilities provided by the government in Bangladesh's Sakhira district, Moon said.

About $1 billion in losses, including damage to homes, crops, and infrastructure, has been reported, according to news reports. Many churches are filled with two to three feet of standing water, a Vietnamese church leader said.

Families are struggling to save their meager possessions. The Moi family in Vietnam considers itself lucky that it escaped with its most valuable possession — a 220-pound pig — and the palm-leaf roof that covered their home, Reuters reported. Others have lost everything and have no means of earning income.

Relief agencies are doing what they can to meet emergency needs. Workers from Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, the International Federation of Red Cross Red and Red Crescent Societies, World Relief, World Vision, and others are on the scene. They are accepting donations and sending funds for food, blankets, medicine, clean water, and temporary shelter.

Churches are helping in the relief efforts. World Relief is working with churches in India, Cambodia, and Vietnam to coordinate and distribute relief and provide temporary shelter, Moon said. World Relief's strongest presence is in Cambodia, where its 165 staffers work with a group of 750 Protestant churches, he said.

A church in central Vietnam collected $450 for churches in the hardest-hit areas. The 1,200- member congregation also had been hurt by the flooding. "My people have been affected, but the people down south were much more severely hit," the pastor told the ministry.

Suffering Christians help others

"That is the remarkable thing about these churches. They have suffered and have families that are hurt, but they are responding to the needs of others," Moon said. "In their need, they had the presence of mind to think of others, and that epitomizes what [Christ's] church is called to do."

Even government leaders in repressive countries such as Vietnam appreciate the compassionate work of Christians in times of emergencies, Moon said. "Time and time again they say, 'You Christians are doing a wonderful job. You are doing what we wish the government could do.'"

Christians are taking the time to minister to spiritual needs. Relief workers and church members are counseling and consoling those who are grieving for lost family members and possessions.

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Church on wheels rumbles across Russia

RUSSIA (Religion Today) — A "church on wheels" is rolling through Russia. Two specially designed railway cars carry Orthodox priests, seminary students, and all the trappings of the Orthodox faith to towns in northern Russia that do not have churches, ENI reported.

Train cars have altars, icons

The interior of the carriages have everything found in a normal Russian Orthodox church, including a richly decorated altar, brass candleholders set before painted icons, and an area for the choir. Several small bells hang from the carriage ceiling.

Six priests on the train conduct baptisms, weddings, and church services, traveling to towns where church buildings and public religious life disappeared under Soviet rule. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy blessed the carriages for service earlier this year.

Clergy hold several services during one-day stops, then travel to another town the next day. The train will visit mainly in regions with high unemployment, poverty, and alcoholism, as is the case in many northern villages, according to ENI. Its first stop was the Arkhangelsk region, 600 miles north of Moscow, in northern European Russia.

"Most of the village churches were destroyed after the revolution," a church leader told ENI. "People like these [living in such villages] are in a desperate need of spiritual support." The effort follows the successful launch in 1998 of a church on a barge, which serves isolated towns and villages more than a thousand miles south of Moscow.

Survey of CRC to serve as basis for further study

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan — A pair of Calvin College professors are planning a project with counterparts at Hope College to study the similarities and differences between the Christian Reformed and Reformed churches.

CALVIN COLLEGE PHOTOS

Corwin Smidt (left) and James Penning.

Corwin Smidt and James Penning, Calvin political science professors, used a seed grant from the Calvin Alumni Association to commission and partially fund a survey this past spring by Calvin's Social Research Center of Christian Reformed Church members across North America.

'First cut' analysis

They now are releasing the "first cut" analysis of that survey. There are some interesting findings in the early data.

For example, fully one third of the CRC respondents did not choose the label "Reformed" to describe themselves religiously, opting instead for other labels, including fundamentalist, ecumenical, mainline, Kuyperian and liberal.

"These CRC members," says Smidt, "were less likely to have grown up in the CRC, more likely to have been members of a CRC church for a shorter period of time, more likely to be somewhat younger, more likely to hold the creeds of the CRC to be less important in their lives and less likely to have served in such roles as Sunday school teacher, elder, deacon and others."

Another one third of respondents chose the label "Reformed," but in conjunction with the label "evangelical." And the final third chose either "Reformed" by itself or "Reformed" with labels such as fundamentalist, ecumenical, mainline, Kuyperian and liberal.

"This is somewhat surprising," says Smidt, "but likely a result of the 'Americanization' of the CRC in the latter part of the 20th century. The fact that Canadian CRC members identity themselves less often as Reformed and evangelical would appear to be evidence of that 'Americanization' process, which the CRC in Canada may still yet face."

The three CRC groups approach their faith in different ways. Those who see themselves as Reformed and evangelical tend to be more "pietistic" than those who are just Reformed. Bible reading, private prayer and weekly church attendance are all higher for the former. In the case of daily Bible reading there is a 14 percentage point difference with 57 per cent of those who are Reformed reading the Bible daily vs 71 per cent of those who are Reformed and evangelical.

More involved in church

The Reformed and evangelical group also tends to be more involved in church via such activities as Sunday School teaching, church committee and volunteering in church. The gap ranged from 11 to 17 percentage points. Those who didn't own the 'Reformed' label at all significantly trailed both of the other subsets in both the piety categories and involvement categories.

None of the three subsets is too keen on denominational affiliation, seeing local congregational life as much more important. Congregational affiliation was rated as extremely or quite important by 79 per cent of the Reformed and 80 per cent of the Reformed and evangelical. Meanwhile, denominational affiliation was seen as extremely or quite important by 57 per cent of the Reformed folks and 60 per cent of the Reformed and evangelical crowd. The non-Reformed respondents were less enthusiastic about congregational affiliation with 65 per cent saying it was extremely or quite important; they also were mild in their support for denominational affiliation with 45 per cent thinking it to be extremely or quite important.

Obstacles to identity

Smidt says the CRC is facing obstacles to denominational identity also shared by other denominations.

"The modern world poses formidable challenges to denominational life today," says Smidt. "And even within denominations many who attend churches aligned with a particular denomination do not choose to identify with that denomination or the religious tradition of which it is a part. There are people who join churches of a given denomination who know little of the denomination's history and might not even identify with the religious tradition of which the denomination is a part."

Smidt also notes the ability of broader religious forces to cut across denominational boundaries.

"Religious movements such as fundamentalism," he says, "encompass a variety of denominations. These movements can challenge the vitality of specific denominations since the religious identities of congregational members may be linked more with the broader religious movements than with the particular denominations to which they belong."

Smidt's survey included 78 per cent U.S. respondents and 22 per cent Canadian respondents.

Smidt hopes to use seed money provided by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship to secure a larger grant for ongoing research which eventually would lead to a book by him, Penning and Hope colleagues Don Luiden and Roger Nemeth, examining the CRC and RCA. Smidt notes that no baseline research has ever been done on the religious beliefs and vitality of CRC members. This ongoing research project would "establish a historical benchmark" that then can be a reference point for future studies.

Smidt, Penning, Luiden and Nemeth also are all part of the International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities, a group that meets every three years and includes representatives from around the world, including Reformed communities in such places as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, South Africa, Hungary, the Netherlands and Scotland.

Christians and autumn leaves: a colorful mix

Chapter & Verse
Mary S. Hulst Antonides

"You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and the hills will break forth before you. There will be shouts of joy and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."
Isaiah 55:12

This autumn has been striking in West Michigan. The trees have exploded with color, but like a good fireworks show, with certain trees lighting up just as others begin to fade.

One of my favorite spots for color gazing is just a short walk away. I hook up my dogs and take them to a smallish city park. Many afternoons in the fall the broad, smooth green areas of the park are full of junior high football teams running plays and the basketball courts are busy with recreational players. But on a small hill in the southwest corner of the park, too full of trees for flying footballs, my dogs and I can quietly explore: they sniff the ground, I examine the trees.

An impressive cross-section of color

I need to be careful. More than once my gape-mouthed gazing at what is over my head has caused made me trip over the roots that are under my feet. I don't know who planted these trees in this park, or if the park was built around the trees, but an impressive cross-section of color is here. A broad-trunked tree with low-hanging limbs shines with bright yellow. A younger, straighter tree contributes an amazingly bright red. A few tree siblings clumped together glow orange, while others scattered about still hold onto their green.

As the days pass, color puddles appear on the ground around each shedding tree. It is as if the color above is being reflected off the ground. Almost perfect circles surround the base of each tree, radiating out in proportion to the limbs above.

All of them bore scars

As I looked today, open-mouthed, watching my steps, I began to notice individual leaves. Many of them are spotted or torn, some show evidence of pests, others of mold. In fact, it was hard to find a leaf that didn't have a mark on it. All of them bore scars of one kind or another.

"It's amazing," I thought to myself. "When they are together, there is such incredible beauty, and yet when they are apart it is so easy to find the flaws."

And then the Spirit, or maybe just the ever-working conscience of a preacher, whispered to me. "How very much like the church."

United, we can radiate beauty

Indeed. Each of us, each of us church members, carries his or her own scars; each of us carries marks of past hurts, of battles fought, of battles we're still fighting. But when we unite with others, in worship, in service, in prayer, in the Word, we can radiate such beauty, such color, such warmth. When all of the members are in harmony, we can put on amazing displays of God's good work in the world.

And when congregations of different denominations are placed side by side, a palette of splendor appears that would be missed if all of the maples and all of the beeches and all of the oaks were grouped together. Walking through a park or even driving down a highway we can easily see how one color complements another, how each tree adds its color to the others to create a magnificent scene.

And again the Spirit whispers, but this time in the interrogative mood: "How very much like the church?"

How often do we seek out the complementary color a neighboring congregation can offer? How often are we content to group together with all of the other maples? How much beauty have we neglected to show the world because of that contentment?

This autumn has been striking in West Michigan, striking in its beauty, striking in the lessons this season brings. As you gaze out on the colors, remind yourself to add your own to the mix. Bring your whole self into your congregation, delighting in the shining red or mellow gold you can bring to the world, and then encourage your congregation to stand alongside others, so that each of you can highlight and complement the beauty of the rest. Happy autumn.

Rev. Mary S. Hulst Antonides is pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Shattered assumptions

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

For the month of October the newspapers in Vancouver and the lower mainland have been full of the disappearance of Heather Thomas a 10-year-old girl on October 1st while riding her bike in the parking lot outside her father's apartment complex in Cloverdale. She disappeared in the midst of an ongoing rash of attempted abductions of children in Vancouver and the lower mainland since school opened in September. Her body was finally found on Sunday, October 22 in Alouette Lake – a 45 minute drive from where she lived. A hiker found her lying face down in shallow water a few metres from shore. She was identified using dental records.

At a televised press conference an R.C.M.P. spokesman with tears in his eyes quietly commented, "At least her parents have her back now.... albeit deceased." Family, friends and children of her school bring flowers to the area where she disappeared. Tears flow freely for the friendly little girl whose life ended so cruelly. Investigators are now looking for a murderer and all of us mourn with her family.

Is God everywhere?

The horror of what she might have experienced at the hands of her abductor is unsettling. We toss and turn in our sleep and worry about our children, grandchildren and all the children of the world who suffer unspeakable acts at the hands of supposedly trusted adults. We think of Kosovo, Bosnia, Uganda and Nigeria just to name a few. We pray and read psalms of lament to express our anger and pain at the injustice of it all and find ourselves no longer able to settle for pious cliches.

And so, we listen with interest to Elie Wiesel, the well known Holocaust survivor and author of his memoir *Night*. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey he relates that even during the horrors of war he "never divorced God....I went on praying to God. I was angry. I protested....(but)....When I see victims of a tragedy — and especially children — I say to God, 'Don't tell me that you have nothing to do with this. You are everywhere; you are God.' "

Our fundamental assumptions

Experiencing intense personal pain can seriously toss our previously unquestioned and unchallenged assumptions about God. ourselves and the world at large on its head. Most of us want to hold on to the assumption that the world is a safe and meaningful place even if we have experienced otherwise. We also want to hold on to the assumption that while God is not always understandable, he is at least fair and loving and has our best interest at heart. But mostly we want to hold on to the assumption that what happens to us matters to God.

In other words, we are not just blobs of organisms but meaningful instruments working out a plan in his kingdom. Yet. when we again are reminded during this month of November of the hideous crimes human beings commit against each other, we cannot help but lament with Elie Wiesel and remind God he is everywhere – because he is God.

Grace: the abnormal of normal

Life's sorrows often shatter the comforting assumptions we unwittingly hold about God, ourselves and the world. Healing on the other hand, can take place as we struggle to make sense of how it all fits together for us now. Elie Wiesel does not hesitate to admit he has no answers for others. He believes the moment we have answers there is no dialogue. So he teaches his students how to ask questions. He believes questions unite us, answers divide us.

Still he remains amazed at himself. When Oprah asks "What does it take to be normal again, after having your humanity stripped away?" he answers: "What is abnormal is that I am normal...I survived the Holocaust and went on to love, to talk, to write, to have toast and tea and live my life – and that is what is abnormal." May all those who have suffered the atrocities of our human existence, including Heather's family, eventually find comfort in this kind of normal.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

A child's life

WORLD BOOK

Princess bonded immediately with us, like crazy glue.

Walfried E. Goossen

Mary and I drove cautiously into the small townhouse courtyard, parked, and were immediately surrounded by a swarm of children.

"Princess is leaving," a couple of them shouted when they saw us. In seconds they surrounded us and our car.

A woman, pregnant and relieved to see us, stepped from a doorway and spoke up. "She's in here."

Princess didn't wait for us to come in. Restrained on a leash by a girl about eleven years old and her younger brother, she wiggled and jumped toward us, yelping and barking with delight.

"She's an American Eskimo," explained the woman, "They're known for their playfulness, their happy disposition and for loving everyone."

Only three months old and a dozen pounds, this pure white fur ball played with human hearts as with toys. When she met someone new, it was always love at first sight.

Princess (a too common name for one so royal) convinced us on sight that her fame was warranted. The children obviously all loved her and called and waved goodbye with mixed emotions.

As we took her to our car, she seemed to be smiling from ear to ear and to forget about her past even before the engine caught life. I wrestled with her to keep her off Mary, who was driving, so she chewed on my goatee and shaved my cheeks with her rough, wet tongue.

Princess bonded immediately with us, like crazy glue. Every time I went to another room, she got up and followed me. Sometimes I had to be especially careful not to step on her when she quietly lay down right at my heels while I did dishes. She even followed me to the bathroom.

In the mornings we had our love-ins. The moment she knew I was awake she came flying onto the bed, stood on my chest and licked every inch of my face with the untamed love and passion of a puppy. Then she discovered my nose. I let her chew it very briefly before I screamed and shoved her away.

My wife and I found this all highly entertaining – and a lot of work. We had to housebreak the little lady, take her for regular walks, monitor her chewing habits and take her to obedience school

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(she taught us and the trainer a thing or two). She needed several shots in the first three months and other medical attention common to puppies.

Each morning around six I took her to the park nearby, where she ran the legs off the larger dogs, a blur of white zigzagging across the dew-moistened morning grass. As she grew week by week, she became increasingly independent. Putting her back on her leash for the walk home was a nerve-wracking endurance test. Worse yet, she was a natural tease. Letting me come within inches of her, she'd blast out of her starting blocks just as I reached for her collar.

I realize now that Princess lives a child's life. She lives in a child's world.

She loved to dig almost as much as to run. This habit would eventually have gone into remission, and the earth from Mary's flowers would have stayed in the pots. But there were two problems to which there seemed to be no solutions — Sammy, our 12-year-old cat, and our neighbors.

When a male tabby has been king of his castle for a dozen years, he prefers to live in regal retirement rather than frolic with a rollicking, aggressive puppy who claims the whole estate for his own from the first hour. At times they tried to get along and were curious about each other. Under my watchful eye they sometimes edged up to each other until they were nose to nose, then backed quickly away if either so much as batted an eyelash. Occasionally they lay peacefully side by side and slept on the couch or the living room floor only a foot or two apart.

In spite of these hopeful signs, they just as often threatened each other, and amidst barking, snarls and hisses, fights nearly broke out. But I remained optimistic.

However, I made a mistake which soon led to Princess' unfortunate, sudden departure. Since it was summer, I often left the balcony door open. She loved the fresh air of our fourth floor balcony and the curious happenings of the larger world, especially the stirring of cars and people on their way to work. She sent them on their way, barking and growling, likely feeling rather important. Understandably, this was displeasing to other neighbors who were not up for work and whom she often woke from a sound sleep.

Had I known the nature of the problem, I would simply have closed the sliding glass door and kept her inside until noon. However, the only solution acceptable to all was to pass Princess on to yet another foster home. My wife, a gentle soul, easily intimidated, was worried. A single tear is symbolic of the might of the weak. I stopped searching for a workable solution to keep Princess.

For the next three weeks I tried to give her away; yet of all the people in Dundas who doted on her and made a fuss over her when I took her for walks, none wanted her.

The whole experience reminds me of two prior incidents, twenty or more years ago. Mary and I befriended a family from Guyana with three young children. I tried to help them find housing, but no one wanted children in their houses or apartments. Children are noisy, they destroy things, etc, etc. I asked one women if anyone gave her a home as a child or if she had lived on the street. She just smiled smugly at my frustration and didn't answer.

The other memory is of a five-year-old boy, Danny, whom my sister cared for as a foster child. Danny had been dragged from one foster home to another again and again until his mother got remarried and took him home, hopefully for good. Had she not, my sister would have adopted him.

I realize now that Princess, like Danny, lives a child's life. She lives in a child's world. The night I finally gave her to a young girl who had met Princess previously at Tim Horton's and fell wholly in love with her, my apprehensions about the cat finally proved true. I was at my computer, when I suddenly heard a heart-wrenching scream from the cat and a murderous growl from the dog. I rushed out to the living room. Princess had Sammy's right side gripped in her teeth and was biting down hard. There was no playfulness in this. Sammy's huge, terrified, glassy, eyes begged me for life.

I am usually in good control of my temper. But, when I see someone – animal or human – inflict pain on another, I become enraged. It is unusual for me to act on this. But this time I grabbed Princess by the hair and skin of her back, tore her off the cat and slammed her down on the couch. My angry voice was likely more painful to her than the bit of physical discomfort she suffered. There is nothing as frightening as the loss of love.

Princess cowered, turned herself inside out and twisted her head upside down on the couch while her back legs still stood upright. Her eyes and whimpering cried, "Mercy, love me."

In a few minutes Mary and I would take her away and never bring her back. And she, poor adorable, little thing, was bound to think (or feel) I was giving her away in anger and hatred.

But circumstances just swept us along. There was no opportunity to change my mind or to heal wounds. I had made a promise, had given my word to a young girl. That was the night to keep it.

While Princess' new owner gushed with wonder at the "most beautiful dog in the world" which sat in her lap, Princess ignored her. The situation was familiar. This was the third time she was being adopted – and rejected. And she knew it. I walked from the car a few steps, then turned around. She sat silently, and glanced at me sideways. I no longer have any doubt that a dog can be sad. (Why do I think of little Danny just now?)

I went back to the car and put my hand into the open window and stroked her head just once more, then put my face in hers. She gave me one quick, silent lick on the nose. Nothing more.

I don't know where Princess and Danny are now. I hope both have good homes, homes they deserve. Still, it breaks my heart to think that some dogs live a child's life. But I'm too sentimental — me, a grown man. After all, a dog is only...a dog, and a child is only....

Besides they get over it, don't they? Perhaps that's why Jesus told us to be like little children (and perhaps like puppies) – fully loving and trusting. They keep us adults human, lessen our hardening, to love again and again.

Wally Goossen is a freelance writer who lives in Dundas, Ont.

The family photo

Intangible Things
Heidi VanDerSlikke

If you look in the closet by our front door you'll see almost *twenty* photo albums, all lined up by year. They chronicle the events of our family life over the past two decades. There are pictures of family gatherings, holidays, friends, birthday parties, and life on the farm. You can see our children growing up over the years, and there are lots of pictures of Jack. We even have pictures of the pets and vehicles we've owned. What you won't find many pictures of is me. That's because I would far rather take the photograph than be in it.

'I'm *way* better looking than that!'

Some people are photogenic. No matter what the shot; they just look great on pictures. Not me. My mother-in-law, in spite of protests from my father-in-law, likes to take pictures of family meals at Christmas and Thanksgiving and so on. She has a few photos of me with my mouth full, my eyes closed, or both. But even when the camera doesn't catch me chewing or blinking, I rarely like the way I look on pictures. My dad had the same problem. I can remember getting films back from the drugstore when I was a kid. My father would look at the ones he was in and exclaim loudly, "I'm *way* better looking than that!"

For the most part I've become quite adept at avoiding the camera. In the unlikely event that I should ever become a celebrity, I'll bet I could give the paparazzi a run for their money. Every fall at Emmanuel Bible College they have everyone stand on the side of a hill on campus and take a big group photograph. This year I mumbled something about being in the witness protection program and made my way to the furthest recesses of the library.

Still, I realize that for the sake of my family every once in a while I should be in a picture in the album. So usually at Christmas I pose by the tree with the kids. Other than that, I drive my kids crazy by complaining that they never take my picture. We never allow Jack to take pictures because every shot he takes is an "action photo" – everything's blurry. Furthermore, his favourite photographic subjects are farm buildings under construction and field crops.

Last night we gathered the family together and had a professional portrait done. Some people dress their families in matching clothes, take them to a scenic spot and have really creative family photographs. I found I had to be really creative just to get everyone, including the photographer, in the same room on the same night. I booked the appointment about eight weeks prior, got everyone to take a solemn oath to be there and hoped for the best.

Hoping for a good hair day

Naturally I was hoping to have a good hair day. (It happens). I guess it wasn't too bad – until I went out for a walk and the wind blew all my hopes away. After that my bangs just kind of flattened out and gave me that "been standing too close to a helicopter" look. I had been thinking of what we should wear for quite some time but didn't come up with any great ideas. We agreed to go for a barn board backdrop, so blue jeans seemed appropriate. At the last minute I was still rifling through my closet wondering what shirt to wear.

Finally we arrived at the studio, vaguely colour co-ordinated and for the most part smiling. As the photographer positioned us on straw bales and straightened out all the little details, I looked at my beloved ones. They made a nice picture nestled there in front of the barn boards. I was suddenly glad that we were preserving the moment for posterity, and thankful for being part of the family. Bravely I took my place in the arrangement, fluffed up my bangs and tried not to blink. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. We'll see.

To the left is a rare photograph of Heidi VanDerSlikke, who lives in Harriston, Ont.

Fiction

I have rights

collected and reviewed by Jane Brereton, Betty Catto, Jeanette Romkema, Sean Steward, and Fenny Wen

I just came home from teaching a children's literature course at Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto and I am psyched! My students and I are going to write this collection of book reviews together. Well, why not. In class we are reviewing books, learning ways to select literature and discussing rationale for working with collections of books rather than an individual book. It seems perfectly natural that they put their learning to task in this column.

These books are about various types of rights: human rights, the right to vote, the right to housing, and children's rights. Here are serious and compelling issues which these children's books deal with in a sincere yet provocative way.

Dare to be Different

Written by Malorie Blackman, Jay Ray, et al.
London: Bloomsbury Children's Books, 1999
ISBN 0-7475-4021-7
77pp.
Picture book for primary and older grades.
ISSUE: Human rights

This collection of writings and images reflects the work and principles of Amnesty International, a world-wide voluntary organization campaigning for human rights. "…the stories and poems celebrate the will and action of individuals to force and create positive change." Daring readers to "be different" the authors and illustrators give us courage to change and have the strength to speak out on issues of justice, equality, and freedom. A unique book; great for the classroom, office, church, and home.

If You Could Wear My Sneakers!

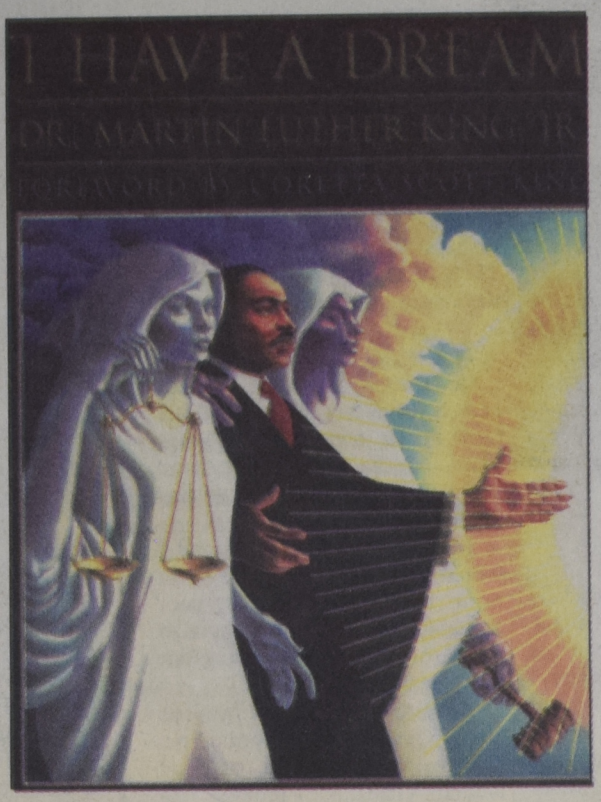
Written by Sheree Fitch, illustrated by Darcia Labrosse
Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1997
ISBN 0-385-25597-7 32pp.
Poetry picture book for all ages.
ISSUE: Children's rights

Through whimsical poetry Sheree Fitch discusses children's rights and provides a matching game calling readers to guess which poem discusses which children's right. *If You Could Wear My Sneakers* is produced in association with The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and offers a playful look at a serious topic. An interactive book which offers children the opportunity to learn about and discuss their legal rights.

I Have a Dream

Written by Martin Luther Jr., illustrated by various artists
New York: Scholastic Press, 1997
ISBN 0-590-20516-1 40pp.
Non-fiction picture book for primary and older grades.
ISSUE: Human rights

I Have a Dream shares Martin Luther's deep longing for freedom in his world-renown speech made on August 28th, 1963. He dreamed and hoped for the day all people, regardless of color or race would live side-by-side in peace and harmony, equality and unity. His speech is one that changed the world forever and reminds us how far we have come in breaking down the walls of racism and how far we still have to go. The illustrations were created by fifteen Coretta Scott King Award winning artists and communicate the bondage and hopes of African-Americans then and now.



The Day Gogo Went to Vote

Written by Elinor Batezat Sisulu, illustrated by Sharon Wilson
Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996
ISBN 0-316-70267-6 32pp.
Historical-fiction picture book for all ages.
ISSUES: The right to vote

Thembi and her great-grandmother, Gogo, are inseparable. Although old and frail, when she hears the news that Black South Africans are allowed to vote for the first time in history Gogo insists on going to the polls. Through a child's-eye view readers follow a family on this day which changed South Africa forever: April 26 1994, the day Mr. Nelson Mandela became president and the entire country danced in the streets. A moving book whose rich pastel drawings and authentic text will touch the heart. A glossary and pronunciation guide for the names and colloquial expressions used in the book are included.

The Lady in the Box

Written by Ann McGovern, illustrated by Marni Backer
New York: Turtle Books Publisher, 1999
ISBN 1-890515-9 40pp.
Contemporary Realistic Fiction picture book for all ages.
ISSUE: The right to housing

Lizzie and Ben have seen a large box in front of the Circle Deli every night. Inside the box sat a lady who used it as a home. The children decide to do something to help and started sneaking food from home to give her. When their mother finds out everyone is surprised at her response: she helps move her to a warm place and starts helping out in a soup kitchen. Homelessness is an issue most people would prefer not to recognize or deal with. Living a life of gratitude and of jubilee, this book reminds Christians, includes the call to serve, love, and aid those less fortunate than ourselves. Sensitive images and an engaging text will stimulate introspection, reflection, and discussion.

The Roses in My Carpets

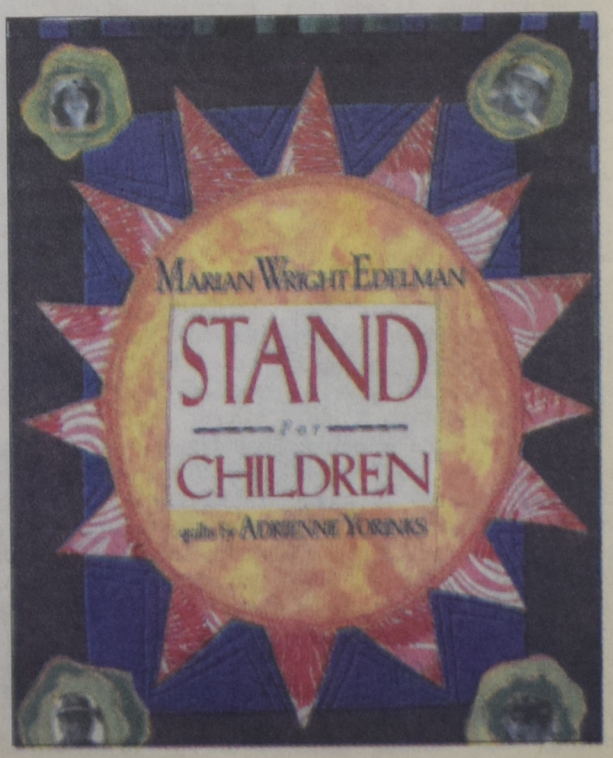
Written by Rukhsana Khan, illustrated by Ronald Himler
New York: Holiday House, 1998
ISBN 0-8234-1399-3 27pp.
Historical fiction picture book for primary and older grades.
ISSUE: The right to self determination

The Roses in My Carpets gives readers a close look at a young Afghani boy's life in a refugee camp. To cope with separation, confusion, hunger, and death he turns to his skill of weaving for comfort. The carpet he designs offers him hope and acts as a metaphor for the reader: It is often the torn pieces, scraps, and discarded pieces that make the most beautiful fabric of life. A touching story of courage and perseverance.

Stand for Children

Written by Marian Wright Edleman, illustrated by Adrienne Yorinks
New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1996
ISBN 0-7868-0365-7 28pp.
Non-fiction picture book for all ages.
ISSUE: Children's rights

Stand for Children outlines the commitment that adults have to children: it does not matter what race, gender, social status that one is from, all children have the right to live in a supportive, loving, protective home. It gives children the opportunity to look back and see the commitment of previous generations. Illustrator Adrienne Yorinks uses quilting and collage to illustrate, cleverly stitching on photographs of children at work and play. The illustrations and written text work harmoniously to communicate a message of love and respect that celebrates childhood and children everywhere.

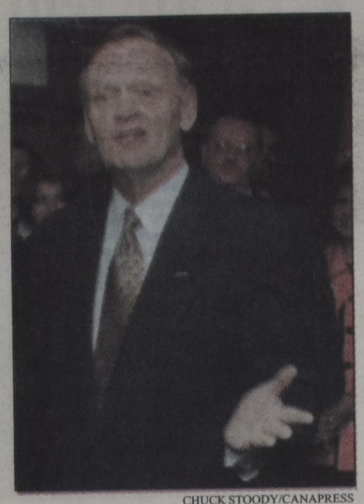


Election 2000: what are our political visions and values?

Gerald Vandezande

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has called the election. Campaign 2000 is underway. According to some polls, the Liberals can win a bigger majority than in 1997. The Canadian Alliance under Stockwell Day claims it can win big, even in vote-rich Ontario, where the Liberals currently hold almost all the seats.

Alexa McDonough's New Democrats and Joe Clark's Progressive Conservatives have hit historic lows in popular support. In Quebec, the electoral battle will most likely be between the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals.



CHUCK STOODY/CANAPRESS

Jean Chrétien

It has become increasingly apparent that the dominant value of many politicians and voters is an obsession with promoting material prosperity.

November 27 will indeed be a decisive day! The "winners" will determine what kind of political future may be in store for our country and what kind of society and economy may emerge for us and succeeding generations.

Conflicting values?

Both Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Day have said they will focus on "values." But it is striking how narrowly they have restricted the "values" debate. Perhaps the key

FRANK GUNN/CANAPRESS

Joe Clark

irony of Campaign 2000 is the degree to which they hold to the same fundamental values. Their overriding concern is defined in terms of the values of tax cuts, government spending, debt reduction, and whose cabinet will be better managers.

It will be interesting to see whether the platforms of the Bloc, the PCs and the NDP will reflect alternative values. That will depend on which fundamental principles and specific policies they articulate and advocate. Will their respective political visions contribute to a quality of life that clearly goes beyond the quantity of things? *Will their political values include a caring-and-sharing way of life that affirms life, respects human dignity, builds genuine community, seeks the common good, fosters good government, and expresses ongoing solidarity with the millions of poor and powerless people, both at home and abroad?*

It has become increasingly apparent that the dominant value of many politicians and voters, including those within the Canadian Alliance, is an obsession with promoting material prosperity. They narrowly view the economy in terms of the ideology of material-growth objectives — objectives that disregard legitimate economic, environmental, social and cultural needs, and the human rights and well-being of all peoples, without discrimination.

Life-affirming values

Joseph Stiglitz, one of the world's most highly respected economists, has challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of faith in material growth. He argues that it "does not offer answers to every important question in development." He also asserts: "Economic policy may not be just a matter for technical experts!" (Stiglitz has been chairman of U.S. President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers and Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist of the World Bank.)

Stiglitz points out that the goals of development should be broader than simply economic growth:

"We seek increases in living standards, including improved health and education, not just increases in measured GDP. We seek sustainable development, which includes preserving natural resources and maintaining a healthy environment. We seek equitable development, which ensures that all groups in society, not just those at the top, enjoy the fruits of development. And we seek democratic development, in which citizens participate in a variety of ways in making the decisions that affect their lives."

According to David Crane, *The Toronto Star's* economics editor, "This is a challenge of fundamental importance not only because Stiglitz is questioning the underlying economic ideology of the past decade but also because the outcome of the debate will profoundly affect the quality of life of people around the world." (June 21, 1998)

What would it take?

In that light, then, what would it take to slowly but surely move all of us, including our corporations, media and political parties, away from idolizing the Gross Domestic Product, away from growth mania and economism, in line with what Stiglitz suggests? What would it take to move us towards promoting human, economic, environmental and social well-being instead?

I am convinced that the struggle for a stewardly economy, a healthy environment, an equitable social order and a distinctly Canadian culture requires nothing less than a substantial change of heart, a radical renewal in life-orientation and a consistent practice of life-affirming core values.

Then Canadians could work together at implementing a different understanding of economic growth. We urgently need an economy driven by grace and gratitude rather than competition and greed. From that perspective, equitable economic growth could be described as the responsible, sustainable development of human gifts and natural resources that would meet legitimate human needs and contribute to the environmental and socio-economic well-being of all people.

The modern pursuit of unrestricted growth in the gross national product (limitless material expansion) in our already wealthy society is unsustainable and often causes chronic poverty, structural unemployment and environmental deterioration.

Corporate responsibility

Accordingly, as I understand the meaning of corporate citizenship and public justice, corporations, such as the profiteering banks and oil companies, are directly responsible for the use they make of their assets and the power that is entrusted to them by Canadian law. But like all of us, *corporations must become more responsible agents of socio-economic justice and more caring stewards of the good creation.* They have the duty to help develop a mutually responsible and supportive society in which all people, including the poor and powerless, can live with human dignity and experience genuine respect.

An important focus of energy, then, for all who would seek to end poverty and renew politics, is corporate responsibility. We must begin to hold corporations publicly

PHILL SNEL/MACLEAN'S

Stockwell Day

accountable not only for the financial return on investment, but also for the way in which that return is achieved and distributed. Corporations must accept direct responsibility for every aspect of their activities, including their impact on the environment, their employees, shareholders, suppliers and customers, as well as on the economic, educational, political and social life of the community, province and nation of which they are a part.

Public accountability requires institutional integrity and public scrutiny. It includes true transparency of decision-making and effective enforceability of policies and standards, in harmony with the bottom-line principles of fairness, justice and equity that shape a responsible society and a participatory democracy. Interestingly, public accountability also enhances corporate credibility and socio-economic stability.

Corporate citizenship should thus focus on integrated socio-economic development — development which views efficiency, productivity and profitability in the context of environmental, fiscal and social stewardship. It demonstrates authentic concern for all the stakeholders, including the fragile creation and the human needs and rights of present and future generations.

Our common calling

Our common human calling and corporate citizenship responsibility, including our institutional and organizational duty, is to help develop and sustain a caring and sharing view-and-way of life. Such a way of life reflects core values and life-choices which are rooted in our communal, daily pursuit of socio-economic justice and environmental stewardship by all, and for all. Responsible corporate citizenship can clearly contribute to a quality way of life and healthy communities.

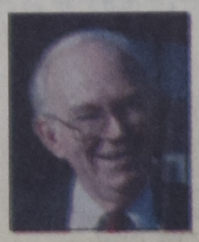
The question is: will corporations take up the challenge? And will we and our governments insist that they do?

The current election campaign is as good a time as any to raise and reflect on vital questions. What do the political parties, their leaders and candidates really think, say and do? What will they actually promise and practice when Parliament reconvenes?

Meanwhile, what will we publicly advocate and personally do as citizens who actively seek the common good, a healthy economy and a responsible society based on full-fledged public justice for all people and God's good creation? Our honest responses will show what kind of people we are and what kind of representatives we elect.

(See related stories on page 14)

***Gerald Vandezande is the former National Public Affairs Director of Citizens for Public Justice and a volunteer spokesperson for the Campaign Against Child Poverty. He is the author of* Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities.** *This article includes edited excerpts. This book is available from Public Justice Resource Centre, 229 College Street, Suite 311, Toronto, ON M5G 1R4*



Citizens for Public Justice's guidelines for public justice

Submitted by Gerald Vandezande

1. Human Dignity: the right of all persons and their communities to be treated with justice, love, compassion and respect, and their responsibility to treat others likewise.

2. Mutual Responsibility: the duty of all persons to contribute to the well-being of the community as they are able, and the duty of each community to contribute to the well-being both of all its members, regardless of their ability, and of those in the larger society.

3. Economic Equity: the right of all persons and communities to adequate access to the resources necessary for a full life, including access to worthwhile work, fair employment conditions and income-security provisions, and our communal responsibility to use such resources responsibly.

4. Social Justice: the right of all persons and communities to full participation in the life and decision-making of Canada, and to adequate access to the resources necessary for a full life, including access to adequate education, health care, housing and child care, and our communal responsibility to use such resources responsibly.

5. Environmental Integrity: the duty of all persons, communities and institutions to live in harmony with, and to practise responsible stewardship of the earth and the environment.

6. Fiscal Fairness: the right of all persons, communities and institutions to fair fiscal treatment and the responsibility of all to contribute fairly for the well-being of all.

CPJ views mutual respect as a way to justice, linking people and communities through bonds of equity and fairness. Likewise, we view mutual responsibility as a tie that binds, linking people and communities through deeds of compassion and solidarity.

CPJ's guidelines for socio-economic development

Submitted by Gerald Vandezande

1. Concerned for the needs of people and future generations, so that we do not abuse them — they are our neighbours, entitled to our love, respect, and support in the pursuit of their legitimate vocations and tasks;

2. Respectful in the treatment of the environment, so that we do not spoil it — the ecosystem, an integral part of God's very good creation, must be preserved as a home for present and future generations;

3. Careful in the use of resources, so that we do not exploit them — the resources of this world are God's good gifts, to be used responsibly in the service of needy neighbors at home and abroad;

4. Watchful in the prevention of waste, so that we do not pollute the water, the soil, and the air — these are all essential to the conservation of a healthy life and a safe working environment;

5. Frugal in the consumption of energy, so that we do not waste it — these precious resources have been entrusted to us as building blocks for the development of a way of life that prizes quality over quantity;

6. Just in the employment of workers, so that we do not violate them — we are all God's unique creatures, called to reflect God's likeness in the way we exercise our God-given responsibility and authority on the job;

7. Careful in the use of technology, so that we do not idolize it — even our technical know-how and means are subject to God's will that all things serve the practice of stewardship and justice;

8. Fair in the setting of prices and fees, so that we do not engage in extortion — the biblical commands, "You shall not steal" and "You shall not bear false witness," also apply to the way we charge for goods and services;

9. Equitable in the earning of profit and wages, so that we do not maximize our earnings for the sake of corporate growth and personal income at the expense of others — the biblical invitation to practise stewardship and do justice applies equally to business and employment; and

10. Honest in the promotion of sales and services, so that we do not practise distortion — customers are also our neighbours, and they deserve our genuine respect in the making of their economic choices and purchases.

CPJ views mutual respect as a way to justice, linking people and communities through bonds of equity and fairness. Likewise, we view mutual responsibility as a tie that binds, linking people and communities through deeds of compassion and solidarity.

Heat Recovery Ventilators– *did you know...?*

- A heat recovery ventilator (HRV) is a simple device that greatly improves indoor air quality. One fan pulls fresh outdoor air through a heat exchanger into the house duct system, capturing around 70 percent of the heat from the outgoing air, while another fan takes the stale air out of your house.
- An HRV provides ongoing comfort in your home through the use of humidity and timer controls.
- Dirty HRV filters reduce the performance of the system. Most filters can simply be dusted, or washed in soap and water, and reinserted.

- News Canada

Soap makers keep ancient craft alive

NIVERVILLE, Man. (MCC Manitoba Release) — Soap making may be a dying skill in many circles, but a group of Niverville and area volunteers is keeping the ancient craft alive. Twice a year they hold a "soap making bee" in a Niverville barn and donate the subsequent bricks of soap to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba.

Pungent smell of hot lard

On this balmy fall day, the pungent smell of hot lard lies thick in the air, as Clara Sawatzky scurries around the barn checking on the soap's progress. She says groups of Mennonites from the area have been making soap for MCC for the last 30 years or so. Sawatzky, who attends Landmark Evangelical Mennonite Church, started in the mid-'80s as a soap making novice but now helps co-ordinate the ongoing project.

Their process starts with pails of lard which are loosened in a large cauldron of hot water. The lard is next dumped into a second fire-heated cauldron. Sometimes tallow (a beef byproduct) is added to the mix. Once the lard has melted, it's again poured into a large pail, its temperature is checked, and a lye solution is added. This triggers the chemical reaction needed to create soap. A volunteer stirs the mixture until it thickens to the consistency of thin pudding.

MCC PHOTOS

Clara Sawatzky holds up a block of soap. Blocks of soap line the shelves behind her.

Ready for cleansing action

The liquid soap is finally poured into rows of plastic-lined, wooden molds to solidify. "This will now be cut sometime in the night," says Sawatzky. "We come here about every two hours and check if it's ready." The volunteers use what looks like a giant cheese cutter to separate the soap into smaller blocks.

After four or five weeks of drying, it's ready for cleansing action. In total, some 30 volunteers here will produce approximately 7,200 lbs of soap in three days of soap making this fall.

Sawatzky sees it as a worthwhile act of service. "It's valuable at the other end — the recipients," she says. "Our soap is distributed by MCC. And they find the places where it is needed." In recent years, the majority of soap donated to MCC has gone to Russia. Other destinations include Serbia and Sudan.

"I also see it as recycling," continues Sawatzky, looking at the pails of lard donated by a couple of local meat businesses. "Who knows where the lard would go?"

"I sometimes think what would I do without soap. We have so much in abundance," says Helen Blatz of Steinbach as she stirs the lard and lye mixture. She and her husband Dan, who also lends a hand, are well-familiar with soap making.

An eye-opener

But for first-timer Sher Sawatzky, it's an eye opener. "I've never seen soap made before," says the 32-year-old (not related to Clara Sawatzky). "I didn't realize it was such a set-up like this," she says, surveying the veritable production line.

Lillian Falk and Ferd Sawatzky preside over a cauldron of melting lard.

She came at the behest of her mother-in-law who worried the old skill may become extinct. "The younger generation, we lose sight of how things were done," says Sher, who attends Elim Mennonite Church in Niverville. "It's going to die out if no one takes this over. No one will know how to do it."

Pennings to run for Canadian Alliance in Ontario

Alan Doerksen

WESTOVER, Ont. — The national director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada has been nominated to run for the Canadian Alliance in southern Ontario in the upcoming federal election.

Westover, Ont., resident Ray Pennings won the candidacy for the Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot riding at an October 30 nomination meeting. Several candidates besides Pennings contested the nomination.

After winning the nomination, Pennings commented, "It's Step One. It's the means to an end." Pennings opened his campaign headquarters in Dundas, Ont. the morning after his nomination victory, with an official opening ceremony on November 4.

Pennings believes one main issue of this election is, "What is it we expect the government to do?" Canadians need to reassess the role of the federal government, he says. "I believe in strong government in things like health care and law enforcement," says Pennings. "Government must ensure that our health care system has stable funding, that our communities are safe, and that we invest in infrastructure. But we also need to make sure that the other institutions of society — families, businesses, unions, community organizations and faith groups — have the space and the resources to also fulfill their roles.

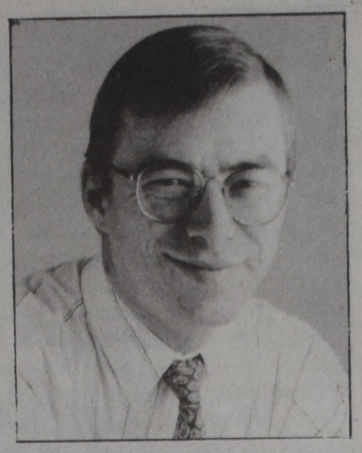
"There certainly is a role for government providing a safety net," he says. Government should be concerned about the poor and marginalised, he adds. "A society is going to be judged by how it takes care of its weakest members." Government doesn't always need to take care of such people directly, but should "make sure it is done," he clarifies.

'Stay out of the road'

In relation to the economy, Pennings says, "I think government can have a very strong negative influence. Good econo mies are where governments stay out of the road." The government should allow businesses and workers to be innovative and competitive, he suggests.

"I think we need to take the environment very seriously," says Pennings, but he does not see that as one of the main issues in this campaign.

This is not Pennings' first run for Parliament. "I've been involved with politics for 20 years now," he says. The 34-year-old has served in senior positions in nine election campaigns, most recently as the campaign manager for the Progressive Conservative Party in 1997 federal election in the Halton riding.



COURTESY RAY PENNINGS

Ray Pennings

Former CHP candidate

In 1988, Pennings ran for the same riding for the Christian Heritage Party (CHP), and received more than 4,100 votes. "I left CHP in the summer of '91," he explains. "There was a major division in the party regarding its future role."

Last spring, Pennings joined the Alliance. "I was excited by Stockwell Day," he explains. "Canadian politics is defined very much by leadership."

Pennings describes his campaign team as a "true alliance" of people from various political backgrounds. "In the past few months, a number of people who voted for various parties in the past election, suggested that I run for Parliament. They all believe it's time for a new type of politics and a new type of leadership in Ottawa. The arrival of Stockwell Day and the Alliance provides an opportunity to make a difference, and I've accepted the challenge."

Asked how well he thinks the Alliance will do in Ontario, Pennings would not give a prediction. "All you can do is pound the pavement.... It's clear the Alliance has achieved a significant level of support."

As a Christian involved in politics, Pennings says, "I don't intend to hide my convictions." But he notes, "Obviously, public policy needs the support of the public in general." Politicians have to make the choice of following "the lowest common denominator" or allowing "vigorous public debate on issues." He supports the latter.

People angry, cynical

Another focus of the election is the attitude of the government, and the electorate's attitude toward the government. "There's a huge amount of cynicism out there," asserts Pennings. "People are angry about the disdain the government is showing" — for instance, the recent Liberal no-show for the presentation of the Auditor-General's report .

Pennings suggests that the Alliance program promoting tax fairness, safe communities, and increased democratic accountability will be welcomed in Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. "Winning against an incumbent is always a challenge, but the people of this riding will support an agenda of change and respect. The choice is between a new style of grassroots, value-based leadership represented by Stockwell Day and the old politics of top-down cynical manipulation practiced by Chretien."

Pennings suggests that the skills necessary to succeed in politics are not unlike those that have been required in his professional life. "The ability to listen to and learn from those who have different views on issues, communicate your own position clearly, and have the backbone to stand your ground while treating others with respect are the keys to success."

Pennings has been involved in his community, serving as an umpire and executive member of the Copetown Baseball Association, as a member of the *Hamilton Spectator* community editorial board, and as the spokesman for a Flamborough citizens group opposed to gambling expansion. He also serves in several capacities in his church community. Pennings and his wife Kathy have a 10-year-old son.

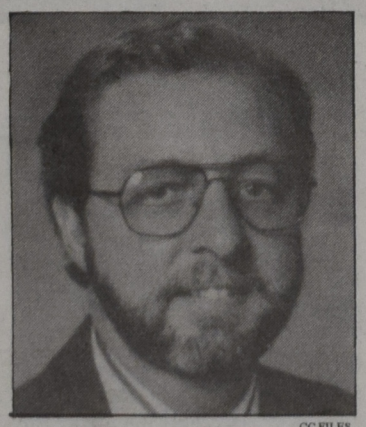
$11 million promised for faith-based Ontario schools

Alan Doerksen

ANCASTER, Ont. — Ontario's government has announced $11 million designated to pay for support services for special needs students in faith-based schools. In a budget speech last May, Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves said, "This funding is to eliminate unfair barriers for special-needs students seeking a faith-based education."

Since then, over the summer, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) proposed to the government a delivery-based model that would have government paying for support services by approved service providers.

According to John Vanasselt, director of communications for OACS, "Indications are that the option being considered by the government is consistent with the principles contained in the OACS proposal. Although the details have not yet been finalized, and the concept is subject to approval by cabinet, the Alliance is optimistic that the needs of Christian schools will be met. OACS will continue to work with government to implement the model, beginning in January 2001. This development opens the doors for many children with special needs who might otherwise not have been able to attend Christian school."



CC FILES

John Vanasselt

Follow-up funding

This funding will be for "those kinds of needs students have which are not clearly medical," explains Vanasselt. Examples of this could be behavioral disorders, moderate intellectual disabilities, or autism, he says. The provincial Ministry of Health will now provide such treatments as physiotherapy and occupational therapies for students attending Christian schools.

This funding comes as a follow-up to an announcement last December of $3.4 million for medical services specifically, says Vanasselt. Since then, Ontario's Christian schools have been receiving government-funded medical support services in school, provided by Community Care Access Centres (CCACs).

"By and large, these services are the result of persistent political activity by OACS and Christian school supporters," asserts Vanasselt. "Although there is some inconsistency across the province, the large majority of Alliance schools have developed good working relationships with CCACs, and the required support services are available for those students who qualify. We encourage school personnel to maintain good relations with CCAC staff, and suggest parents consider applying for positions on CCAC boards."

More wheels for the church in Sudan

SUDAN (Religion Today) — Pastors in southern Sudan are "pedaling" the gospel, thanks to a gift of 30 new bicycles, the British-based Barnabas Fund reports. More than half of the 300,000 people in the Rumbek area of the country are Christian, but civil war in the largely Muslim land has left many of them destitute and seeking spiritual solace.

The $4,000 investment in bikes is helping ministers who were having difficulty serving their scattered congregations. Pastors had to walk long distances between their churches because the area has no public transportation and cars are a luxury.

Many of the 286 rural congregations (up from 10 in 1983) went without seeing their pastor for months at a time, Barnabas reported. The bikes also help evangelists preach the gospel in villages that have no church.

A similar project in Tanzania gave motorcycles to two evangelists in the Singida region. The two men serve a population of more than 54,000 people, two-thirds of them Muslim, according to the Barnabas Fund.

Ministry among Muslims is critical in the area, which is experiencing growing Islamic influence. But many new Christians in Sudan come from a Muslim background.

News

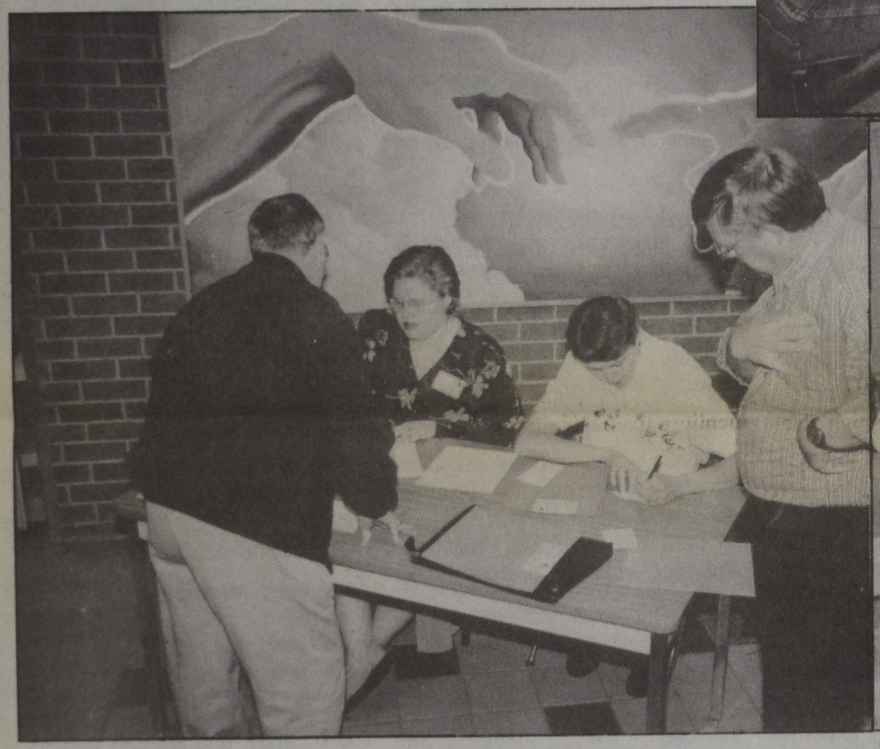
A day of encouragement, celebration and training

Harry der Nederlanden

HAMILTON, Ontario — The annual "Day of Encouragement" organized by Diaconal Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada has become a huge, lively, edifying affair. It was held at Hamilton Christian High on Oct. 21, a splendid, colorful fall Saturday, and was preceded by a day of special training for church leaders held at Redeemer.

The day of workshops and sharing has expanded to include not just deacons but pastors, elders and anyone interested in learning how to improve their skills in ministering to others. More than 750 people attended, participating in several dozen workshops. Ken Miedema led morning worship and gave a full concert on Friday night. Participants said they often learned as much from one another as from workshop leaders. The CRC has benefited immensely from the exchange of information, cultivation of skills, direction, inspiration and encouragement that occurs every year on this special day.

Rather than write a thousand words, we share with you some of the pictures taken Oct. 21 by Lowell Witvoet.



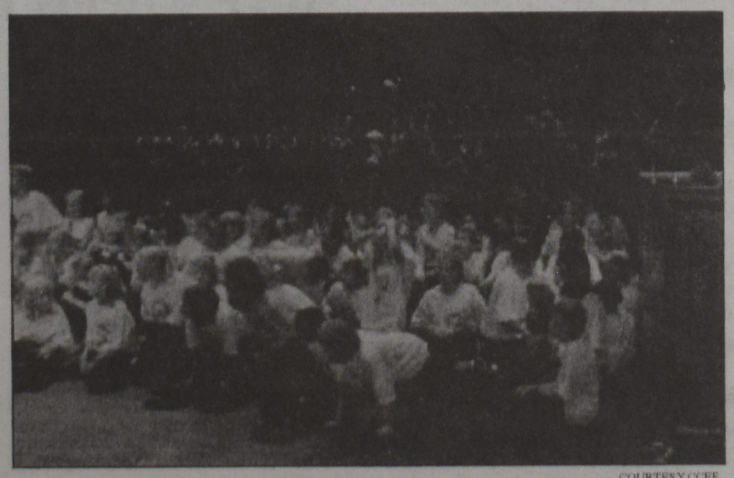
Canadian Christian Education Foundation celebrates 25 years

Harry der Nederlanden

HAMILTON, Ont. — The Canadian Christian Education Foundation celebrated 25 years of support for Christian education in Hamilton Place on Oct. 20, filling the huge auditorium with parents, grandparents and many others, and with the sweet, clear voices of 1,000 students from area Christian Schools.

Pulling out all the stops

The rally organizers pulled out all the stops. Besides the 1,000-strong children's choir conducted by Harold de Haan, there was a fine choir from Redeemer University College, a party of flag bearers to lead in the officials and speakers, Lincoln Alexander, the former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Mayor of Hamilton, Andre Knevel on the organ and Liselotte Fennema, from the Netherlands, on the panflute.



COURTESY CCEF

A 1,000-strong children's choir performed at CCEF's 25th anniversary.

Rev. John D. Hellinga delivered a rousing address giving praise to God for what we have been able to achieve in establishing Christian education in Canada and pointing to the challenges that still face us.

The highlight of the evening was clearly the 1,000-voice children's choir, which filled the hall with its bright sound clear to the second balcony. In their white T-shirts emblazoned with the CCEF logo, the choir looked like a sea of faces rolling toward the audience. They were a hard act for the Redeemer choir to follow, and because the program was being taped for CTS television, the choir had to do their number twice, due to some technical snafu. Nobody, however, complained: they were worth hearing twice.

The CCEF was organized in 1975 as a counterpart to its U.S. parent to help fund curriculum development and textbook production for Christian schools. Mr. Fred Vander Velde was appointed to be executive director that first year and he's still on the job today. Over these years the CCEF has collected more than $2 million to produce teaching material for Christian schools, most of which was sent directly to Christian Schools International in the U.S. for curriculum development.

Most curriculum development for Canadian Christian schools is now done in this country by the school associations in their respective provinces, such as the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

The kids who participated in the choir are to be commended not just for their singing – even on the second balcony every word they sang was clear as a bell – but for sitting so still through a program that lasted two whole hours.

News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

"PEACE, PEACE, WHEN there is no peace." These familiar words from Jeremiah sum up the situation in Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular.

The City which we call Holy is certainly not a picture of the New Jerusalem to come. On the contrary. When Ariel Sharon took that walk on the Temple Mount toward the Al Aksa Mosque, surrounded by a thousand Israeli troops, it was not to pray or ask for forgiveness or promote the cause of peace — the usual reason for visiting a house of worship.

As the leader of the opposition, Sharon's secular and ungodly intent was to do the opposite: to damage the peace process, sow dissension between the moderates and conservatives on both sides of the Middle East conflict and so shore up his wavering political support. In doing so, he demonstrated beyond a doubt that Israel and the Palestinians are divided by irreconcilable differences. Sharon succeeded. Ehud Barak, Israel's leader, has now invited him to a coalition government, formally ending all attempts to seek a solution to the Palestine Problem.

CLINTON HAS TRIED repeatedly to be a peace broker. His eagerness to earn a place in history made him push a bit too hard and the deal went off the cliff. The president had not realized that there already was a solution of sorts: the two parties had a tacit understanding to informally live together and it worked. When Clinton wanted a formal treaty, this elastic equilibrium snapped, the differences came out in the open and the pent-up frustrations erupted.

So when Sharon made that historic walk, he did light the match, but the combustible material was there, ready to flare up at his provocation. The Palestinian explosion was an answer to both Yasser Arafat and the Israeli people that the so-called 'peace process', has been pounded to pieces and now may never come about. Years of negotiations, years of bit-by-bit concessions, on paper at least, were constantly undermined by the Israelis who kept on settling more land, kept on building more settlements and kept on controlling all essential services. Israel now prepares for war: three submarines with possible nuclear capability are on the alert, ready to obliterate any Middle East country that dares to openly choose sides.

AND SO JEREMIAH'S words still stand: 'peace, peace, when there is no peace' — the simple reason being that the radical elements on both sides want no peace. Peace is a matter of the heart. Peace is a matter of attitude toward life. Peace is a matter of trusting the future: let go, let God. Both the orthodox Jews, mainly centred in Jerusalem, and the equally fanatic adherents to Islam, dwell in the past and are ruled by the past. They cannot and will not grasp — are afraid to grasp — peace, because as people welded to the past, they can never surrender to peace. Their security lies in ancient history and in a remote and exclusive God.

RECENT EVENTS complicate matters as well. The legacy of the Holocaust is still at work. Some 60 years ago European Jews were led to the slaughter like sheep and this still haunts this assertive nation. Concessions remind them of World War II.

For the Palestinians there is the festering resentment of having been forced to resettle in camps in Lebanon and Jordan. Throw in Jerusalem, which both parties see as the holiest of places, and the hand of history tightens its grip even more.

For all of them politics is a dead issue. It is history that lives. And when history overwhelms politics, it is not prayers but guns that are heard. While prayers are healing agents, guns maim and kill and shatter peace.

Israel is at the hub of the world. It is situated on the Mediterra-nean: "medi" means middle; "terra" means earth. This 'Middle-Earth' has always been an explosive place. The current conflict has its roots in WW I when the British, who ruled Palestine at the time, gave the Jews permission to settle there, although the Palestinians had lived there for centuries and had not been consulted. During and after WW II, millions of Jews came back to the land from which they were driven in AD 70 by the Romans. Because they needed space, they drove out the native population by legal and illegal means. Millions of Palestinians now live as permanent refugees.

AS LONG AS THE WEST controlled the oil, this posed no problem. They no longer do. Arabs do — spiritual kin to the Palestinians. The vast reserves under Arabian soil will in the foreseeable future cause a thousand Arabian Nightmares. Even now, Saddam Hussein, if he so desires, can throw the entire world into chaos by withholding his two million barrels per day from the market.

Religion rules here, which also has made the Arab world the only region in the world still ruled by dictators, autocrats and kings, without one real democracy. Islam brooks no criticism. Whereas Christianity claims to be a religion of the future, trying to rethink its relevance for today and its significance for tomorrow, Islam looks to the Koran, its teachings forever cemented in concrete. In this they are like the Orthodox Jews, who are captives of their Torah; yet their paths have diverged diametrically.

Toss in Bin Laden, a rich Saudi, whose sole goal is to thwart the aims of the U.S.A., seen as the personification of evil in this world, and you have an even more deadly mix.

ENTER THE U.S.A. IT spends more money on the military than the next five countries combined. It is a sure Goliath in the midst of defense-poor dwarfs. Perhaps 'dwarfs' is not the right word. Maybe 'Davids' is more appropriate. When I watched the Palestinians battling the Israeli soldiers, I saw a lot of slingshots – David's favorite weapon.

Both Israel and the U.S.A. can be seen as that Philistine giant who scared the wits out of Saul's army until David with a well-aimed stone killed that giant. So far, they have not even dented its armor, but that can change, because we live in a rapidly changing world where globalization helps terrorists.

COLD-WAR ARSENALS are for sale, as are the scientists who built them, and computers can be cracked, no matter how sophisticated. Some clever Arab gained access to the precise docking and refueling schedule of the USS Cole. The explosion that crippled it is like a shot from a .22 compared to what is now feasible.

Consider this possible scenario drawn from a book by Anthony Lake, former national security advisor to President Clinton. In his book, *Six Nightmares*, Mr. Lake writes that since 1992 more fissile material — the critical ingredient needed to make a nuclear bomb — has been stolen from the former Soviet Union than the U.S. was able to produce in the first three years of its nuclear program. That is one scary aspect of today's terrorist movements, which now have permanent links to drug cartels and such states as Libya and Iraq, two countries intent on damaging the western world — the U.S.A. in particular. The book mentions that Saddam Hussein has admitted to producing 8,000 liters of anthrax, about 20,000 liters of botulinum toxin and many tons of chemical weapons.

Each of these concoctions can kill billions of people. Smuggling these lethal substances into North America would be easy. Free trade and globalization call for speedy movement of goods and people in and out of both Canada and the U.S. Border checks tend to be random and rare. Among the customs people there is a joke: the easiest way to smuggle chemical weapons into America would be to put them in a container of illegal drugs.

On '60 Minutes' I saw an interview with the current security chief in Washington. He told America that President Clinton expects exactly such a murderous surprise within the next 10 years or so. The U.S. Emergency Response answer has been to build secure warehouses throughout the nation stocked with medical supplies, anti-anthrax medicine — if there is such a thing — and other material needed to at least alleviate the tremendous suffering and deaths resulting in such an attack.

THE U.S. HAS THE mightiest army in the world. It is considering spending $60 billion to research a missile shield. But the immediate and direct threat to the nation's well-being needs something totally different. The only sure way to avoid this sort of threat is to have a total police state, like that of the German occupation from 1940-45 or the Soviet regime under Stalin. Only with secret police everywhere, with spies and moles, with tightly restricted freedom and surveillance cameras everywhere, as described in Orwell's novel *1984* , can such a catastrophe be forestalled. Not a pleasant thought.

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT we live in a dangerous world, where there are lots of little Davids with something much more dangerous than slingshots – all out to slay the U.S. Goliath. It stands to reason that the aim of these terrorists are big cities such as New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago, perhaps Tokyo, which narrowly avoided a dangerous poisoning a few years ago.

When it comes, nobody will receive a warning. Even if the authorities get advance notice, it will come without warning for the populace, for evacuating a large populous area is an organizational impossibility. It will strike like an earthquake, except much worse.

Sorry for painting such dreadful scenarios. I found these items in the current news media, such as TV, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* and other periodicals.

As I have said before: we live in interesting times.

Bert Hielema is glad to be alive today and a witness to the most fascinating events in human history. He watches the world mostly from his rural abode in Tweed, Ont., even though this column comes from St. Paul, Minnesota.

Christianity and Culture

Thinkers discuss how to relate Christian faith to culture

Ralph W. Vunderink

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.— It was another splashing success, as over 160 interested individuals arrived at the southern province of North Brabant, the Netherlands this past summer. They discovered they all had a common aim: how to make the Christian faith relate to human culture. For many the Sixth International Symposium also meant chatting with old friends and making new acquaintances.

RALPH W. VUNDERINK

The morning devotions in the chapel of the conference resort, a converted Ciscercian monastery dating back to the 13th century, were conducive to faith and meditation

Ideal location

Picturesque Bovendonk in the tiny town of Hoeven provided the ideal spot for such encounters between teachers, artists, government employees, pastors, and philosophers (August 21-25). The conference resort, a converted Ciscercian monastery dating back to the thirteenth century, invited animating dialogues and leisurely walks in the woods.

The morning devotions in the chapel were conducive to faith and meditation. Calvin Seerveld had us sing his translation of Psalm 92 to a Genevan tune. Speakers from other continents challenged the listeners to spiritual renewal. It was refreshing to me that members of the Calvinistic Philosophy Association could find their Lord in a Catholic setting.

Main speakers

The five main speakers addressed the topic "Cultures and Christianity A.D. 2000." After an introduction by Dr. Hendrik Geertsema, Dr. Bong Ho Son, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics in the National University of Seoul, South Korea, introduced that all-encompassing topic. Instead of summarizing his invigorating presentation, let me quote a few lines:

"Western culture has identified itself as Christian too much and too long.... Only when it becomes radically critical of Western culture and ready to give up all the advantages and privilege[s] the latter provides, can Christianity be truly reformed and universal in the desired sense of the word. There seems to be no easy way out of the present apathy for true believers except taking a critical distance from the secularized culture and being ready to make a radically new beginning comparable to the believers at the beginning of the first millennium. As the early believers, true Christians in the West should depend upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and be ready to renounce worldly benefits in the eschatological hope."

In the discussion that followed, Dr. Son urged members to adopt a simpler lifestyle and to share their possessions with others, for instance, with the disabled. On Tuesday morning, retired Bennie van der Walt from South Africa, related three big concepts: religion, worldview, and culture. Other speakers probed "Reformational Economic Theory" (Dr. Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra), "Cultural Diversity and Technological Development" (Dr. Adrian Vlot), "The Family and Cultural Change—Some Christian Reflections" (Dr. Elaine Storkey), and "Politics in One World" (Dr. James Skillen). Non-Western delegates voiced concern about the impact of Western technology on the future of their own native craftsmanship.

Humor

The meetings were not all profound and demanding, however. In one humorous moment, Dr. Son stated all politicians were corrupt. As his remark sank in, some glanced at one Dutchman, Senator Schuurman, wondering what he would reply. When Dr. Son recognized the senator afterward, he quickly added: "Dr. Schuurman has no power."

In another context, a speaker from the Czech Republic ventured that Columbus did not know the purpose and implications of his discovery of the New World. He was promptly challenged by a delegate from the New World who announced: "Columbus' sole purpose was to make India Catholic."

Dooyeweerd prize

The Herman Dooyeweerd prize was awarded on Thursday evening. It was a simple award: a penny and an inscription for 'work in the fields of systematic philosophy or the history of philosophy" furthering the cause of Reformational philosophy. The recipient this time was Dr. Kor Bril, a Dutchman who recently fleshed out and, in fact, completed Vollenhoven's work to articulate a Christian approach to the history of Western philosophy.

To the uninitiated, the graphs, charts, and terminology (for instance, dualism and monism, cosmology and cosmogony) may seem overwhelming; to the philosophical experts they are very helpful. I hope someday the retired librarian-philosopher will translate all this massive information into story form so even those who never went to college can read with profit the story of Western men and women.

Workshops

Besides the presentations by five main speakers, there were forty workshops, of which I attended two. (1) Wendy Elgersma Helleman (Ontario) spoke on the early church father Justin Martyr and the logos. In her comments, she carefully explained what the church father meant by the "Word" or the logos. In the discussion we debated whether the apostle John borrowed the notion of the Word ("In the beginning was the Word," John 1:1) from Greek philosophy or restated God's creation of the universe through speech ("And God said," Genesis 1:3). And (2) biblical scholar Mike Goheen, from Redeemer College, tackled Lesslie Newbigin's approach to missions, outlining a sound strategy of acquainting individuals with the Gospel without compromising the essentials of the Christian faith.

The discussion of Newbigin's missionary endeavors proceeded considerably more peaceably than the discussion on my paper concerning relativism-absolutism. Quite unexpectedly we entered a heated debate regarding Newbigin's controversial claim that Christianity affirms the "unique truth of the revelation in Jesus Christ" but does not deny the "possibility of the salvation of the non-Christian," and that it "refuses to limit the saving grace of God to members of the Christian Church" but rejects "non-Christian religions as vehicles of salvation" (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 59).

Others sessions I wished I could have attended were "On the Notion of Relative Truth," by Rene van Woudenberg (Free University, Amsterdam), "Religious Pluralism, Cross-Cultural Truth in Religion, and Christianity," by William Sweet (Canada), and "Transplanting Kuyperian Organizations into Canadian Soil: The Experience of Reformational Social Philosophy in the Anglo-American Context," by John Hiemstra (Canada).

Unresolved issue

As some readers of Christian Courier may be aware, the Reformed community has not found a way to link Christian theology done by Reformed theologians and Christian philosophy as developed by Herman Dooyeweerd. The late Dr. Gordon Spykman has been a single exception. At the conference I noted the split in thinking again on this, in my view, necessary connection. If Christian philosophers take their basic clues from Scripture, namely, that God created a good universe, that in Adam humanity fell into sin, and that Christ in part redeemed fallen humanity, why then can they not share this integral insight with Reformed theologians?

Ralph W. Vunderink is a senior lecturer at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He lives in Jenison, Mich.

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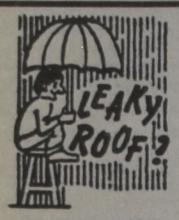

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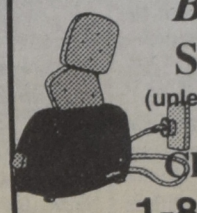

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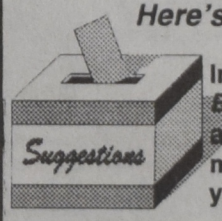

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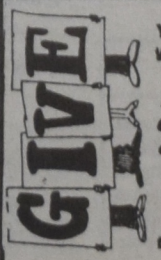

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Birth

DE JONG:
"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." (Ps.106:1)
Kevin & Heather de Jong announce, with gratitude to God, the safe arrival of their third child, a beautiful baby boy
ETHAN QUENTIN
born September 23, 2000, weighing 7 lbs.14 oz. A little brother for Rachel and Zachary. Kevin and Heather's loved ones rejoice with this new addition to the family.
Home address: 250-9th St. SW,
Owen Sound ON N4K 3N8

Personal

Single, Christian man, enjoys the outdoors, quiet evenings, spending time with family and friends, living in Central Ontario, would like to meet a Christian woman, age 30-40. Send replies to: **File #2711**, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines ON L2W 1A1.

Engagement

We thank God for his gift of love and are happy to announce the engagement of our son
BENJAMIN ADAM MAAS
and
CATHERINE MARGARET DE BRUIN
daughter of Aris & brenda de Bruin of Alliston, Ont.
Love and best wishes,
Gary and Mary Maas
7 Heather Pl.
Brampton ON L6S 1E7

Anniversaries

Hoogeveen Embro
1945 November 14 2000
"May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem. And may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel" (Ps. 128:5,6)
AREND and JENNY BENJAMINS
An Open House will be held on Saturday, November 18, 2000,
from 2-4 p.m. at the Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church, 429 King St. W., Ingersoll, Ont.
Best wishes only.
Congratulations, Mom and Dad, on your 55th wedding anniversary. May the Lord continue to bless you in the coming years.
Love from your children:
Martin & Kathy – Wellesley
Wayne & Maria – Cookstown
Neil & Helen – Cambridge
Hetty – Ingersoll
Nick & Diane – Ingersoll
Eric & Mary – London
Nancy – Port Stanley
Marlene & Shawn – Ingersoll
Harry & Judy – Ingersoll
Rita & Jeff – Ingersoll
John – Woodstock
and 39 grandchildren,14 great-grandchildren.
Home Address: RR 4, Embro ON N0J 1J0

1950 Nov 25 2000
Renfrew Brinston
With thankfulness to God we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents
JOHN and MARIE BOSMAN-VINK
We pray the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in his care.
Rita & Harry Jeninga – St. Marys
Rodney, Shawn
Johnny & Debbie – Ingleside
Katie & Noel (fiancée)
Henry & Susan – Cardinal
Melinda, Chelsea, John
We invite family and friends to join us for an Open House from 2-4 p.m. at Williamsburg C.R.C. in Williamsburg, Ont. on Nov. 25, 2000.
Their home address is:
J. & M. Bosman, RR 2, Brinston ON K0E 1C0, 613-652-4647

Send your anniversary, birthday and other important family notices to *Christian Courier* at fax #: 905-682- 8313, or by e-mail to: ccadpromo@aol.com

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Rienk & Tinie Feddema on their 40th wedding anniversary.

1960 November 4 2000
With thankful hearts we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents
RIENK and TINIE FEDDEMA
(nee KRUYS)
May the Lord continue to bless and keep you in His loving care.
Simon & Shirley Feddema
Katelyn, Michael, Benjamin
Barbara & Frits VanderWal
Wilma & Brian Norg
Shailene, Joshua, Aaron
Ray Feddema & Lisa Robia
Jennifer Feddema & Morris Akano
Home address: 68 Prospect St., Bowmanville ON L1C 3H2

1950 November 22 2000
"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 107:1)
With joy and thankfulness we announce the 50th wedding anniversary of
JOHN and DEBORAH OPTHOF
We thank God for His faithfulness and care to them. We pray that He will keep them in His loving care.
Love from your children and grandchildren:
Cathy & Stuart Parkinson – Brantford, Ont.
Daniel, Rachel
John Opthof – Smithville, Ont.
Bill & Helen Opthof – Grimsby, Ont.
Chris Kort, David Kort, Amanda, Shauna Kort, Michelle, Rosanne
Neil & Tina Opthof – Calgary, Alta.
Adrian, Annalise
Corinne & Clarence Bick – Ancaster, Ont.
Heather, Andrew, Victoria, Jocelyn, Davis
Liz & Mark Szwarc – Thamesford, Ont.
Julia
Home address: 5 Hazelwood Ave., Grimsby ON L3M 1J9

Happy 50th anniversary
FRED and INA KUNTZ
Married Dec. 14, 1950, in Mijdrecht, the Neth.
An Open House for family and friends will be held on Sat., Dec. 9, 2000, from 2-4:30 p.m. in the Rehoboth Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, 800 Burnhamthorpe Rd., Etobicoke, Ont.
Congratulations from your children and grandchildren!
Christine & John Vermeer, Alina & Dale Abbott, Fred, Jimmy, Reinder & Johanna, Julia, Michael, J. Fred Kuntz, Angela & Ed Tamminga, Asley, Lindsay.

The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how **far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief.**

... T. S. Eliot

(1888-1965)

Obituaries

Beilen, Dr. Woodstock
the Neth. Ont.
May 1, 1921 - October 9, 2000
On Monday, Thanksgiving Day, our dear wife, mom, oma and great-oma peacefully went home to be with Jesus.
JANTJE VORDING
(nee SCHIPPER)
Beloved wife of Kornelis Vording of Woodstock, Ont.
Dear mother of:
Ralph & Joanne – Belmont
John & Ineke – Fonthill
Jack – Woodstock
Bill & Lynn – Embro
Luke & Cecile – Eastwood
Jane & Herman House – Sweaburg
Lovingly remembered by 17 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.
Dear sister and sister-in-law of Annie & Albert Moes of Strathroy, Lucas & Femmie Schipper of Smithville, Luchie & Jans Timmerman and Henk & Dinie Schipper of Drenthe, the Neth.
The funeral service was held on October 12, 2000, at the Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Woodstock, Ont. with Rev. Gerald Hogeterp officiating.
Address: Kornelis Vording, 1168 Mohawk St., Woodstock ON N4T 1A4

For advertising rates and info, call: 1-800-969-4838

Classifieds

Obituary

Bussum Brampton
the Neth. Ont.
Nov. 12, 1914 - Oct. 10, 2000

On Tuesday, October 10th, at the age of 85, the Lord took home our dear mother, Oma and Great-Oma

CHRISTINA ELIZABETH WONDER
(nee BRANDS)

Unexpectedly for us, but in His time, the Lord took Christina to himself into His eternal glory.

Predeceased by her loving husband Hark Wonder and lovingly remembered by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

Jim & Hennie Wonder – Oshawa
Halbe & Marjory Claus – Seaforth
Fritz & Nancy Withoven – Oshawa
Pieter & Trix Wonder – Hagersville

11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Funeral service was held at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, where she lived for over 21 years.

Lintelo Brampton
the Neth. Ont.
Feb. 9, 1913 - Oct. 4, 2000

On Wednesday, Oct. 4th, the Lord took home our dearly loved Mother, Opoe and Great-Opoe at the age of 87 (widow of Jan Bierman (1968).

ANNE BERENDINA BIERMAN
(nee WEVERS)

"For you, Oh Lord have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 116:8, 9)

Mother of:
Jean & Wybe Bylsma – Cobourg, Ont.
Joan & Wieberen VanderMeer – Brockville, Ont.
Anne & Bill Reuvers – Kingston, Ont.
Harry & Clara Bierman – Kitchener, Ont.
John & Wendi Bierman – Athens, Ont.
Rita & Peter Beerda – Dorchester, Ont.
Gary & Helen Bierman – Belmont, Ont.

Opoe to 28 grandchildren & 26 great-children.

The funeral was held at the Athens Christian Reformed Church on Saturday, October 7th, 2000

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Student Fund - Chatham

Any student from **Classis Chatham** who has applied to Calvin Seminary or its S.P.M.C. Program for the purpose of **full-time ministry in the CRC** and who is in need of financial assistance for the coming academic year, is asked to request application forms from the Secretary, **Jane Buma, 9 Campbell Crescent, R.R. 2, Ilderton ON N0M 2A0.** The completed application forms must be received no later than **February 16, 2001**, in order for the application to be processed. First time applicants should reserve the evening of **Monday, March 5, 2001**, for an interview with the Student Fund Committee.

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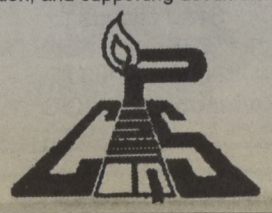
A secondary principal is required for September 2001 to direct, implement and co-ordinate the total educational program of the secondary school in close co-operation with the Board, Education Committee and staff. The secondary school has a staff of 25 and an enrolment of 330 students in grades 8-12.

Celebrating our 40th anniversary this year, P.C.S, is looking for **an innovative, visionary principal** to guide the further development of the school. The principal must be a committed Christian, be a team player, be committed to professional development, and be able to articulate a clear vision of Christian education. This person is expected to demonstrate spiritual, educational, and administrative leadership. Responsibilities include developing positive community and staff relationships. P.C,S, seeks a principal with a minimum of four years of successful experience in Christian school leadership.

By December 31, 2000, please direct your inquiries and forward your resume, a statement of your vision of Christian education, and supporting documents to:

Bill Bomhof,
Chair of the Principal Search Committee
c/o Pacific Christian Secondary School
654 Agnes St, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 2E6
Phone: (250) 479-4532
Fax: (250) 479-3511
E-mail: pcshs@islandnet.com



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This position requires two years relevant experience. Good communication skills, especially in the Dutch language would be an asset. Please mail or fax resume by noon, Nov. 16, 2000, to:

SHALOM MANOR
Attn: Liz Millar
12 Bartlett Ave., Grimsby ON L3M 4N5
Fax: 905-945-1211

We thank you for your application;
however, only those considered will be contacted.

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- News Canada

Miscellaneous

The CCEF Volunteer Board of Directors, salute the students, teachers, and parents of the following schools for their participation in the recent successful

25th Anniversary Celebration of the CCEF at Hamilton Place

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John Calvin Christian School, **Guelph**
Heritage Christian School, **Jordan Station**
Laurentian Hills Christian School, **Kitchener**
Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**
Smithville District Christian High School, **Smithville**
Strathroy Community Christian School, **Strathroy**
Trinity Christian School, **Burlington**
Calvin Christian School, **Dundas**
Cambridge Christian School, **Cambridge**
Dunnville Christian School, **Dunnville**
Guido de Bres Christian High School, **Hamilton**
Jarvis District Christian School, **Jarvis**
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Provide resume and statement of educational philosophy.

Classifieds

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Church News

Christian Reformed Church:

Classis meeting:
Classis Chatham of the Christian Reformed Church will meet in regular session D.V. Tuesday, January 30, 2001, in the Strathroy-East C.R.C. All materials for the Agenda must be in the office of the stated clerk by Monday, December 11, 2000.

Miscellaneous

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Job Opportunities

ADMINISTRATIVE JOB POSTING

Vancouver Christian School, a culturally and denominationally diverse community school of 350 students from Kindergarten through Grade 10, is seeking a dynamic leader to join the administrative team beginning August 2001. We are seeking someone who is a keen disciple of Christ with the gift of caring and love for students, and good personal relational skills. This person should have a strong background in and vision for Christian education. Experience in administration, the ability to work well in multicultural situations, and the ability to pursue development work within the school community and beyond are assets. Deadline for replies is January 5, 2001. Please send your résumé to:

Administrative Search Committee
Vancouver Christian School
3496 Mons Drive
Vancouver B.C. V5M 3E6

CALVIN COLLEGE

The Calvin College Education Department is re-opening the search for candidates for a **tenure-track position starting in August 2001**. The position primarily involves teaching reading and reading across the curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level. It is expected that all full-time faculty assume responsibilities for academic advising, curriculum development, committee service, and research and professional scholarship.

Qualifications include: 1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in reading; 2) recent K-12 teaching and/or administration experience; 3) a scholarship agenda; and 4) commitment to a Reformed Christian expression of faith.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is an equal opportunity employer. The College encourages the application of women and minority candidates. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and curriculum vitae to:

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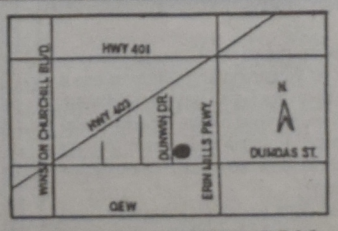

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Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Nov. 17	Christian Men's Choir "Crescendo" at First CRC, 287 Water St., **Guelph,** Ont. at 7:30 p.m. $8 each or $20 per family, available at John Calvin Chr. School, 290 Water St., Guelph.
Nov. 17	First CRC of **Thunder Bay,** Ont. - 50th Anniversary celebration dinner and program. For dinner reservations or more information, call Audrey Grootenboer at 807-935-2778. See ad in Oct. 2 issue.
Nov. 18	Piano recital by Edmonton soloist Roger Admiral, Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis,** Ont., 7:30 p.m. Tickets: $7.50, $20/family, all proceeds for the new piano fund for J.D.C.S.
Nov. 18	Christmas Bazaar Calvin Mem. Chr.School, 300 Scott St.,**St.Catharines**,10 a.m. - 9 p.m.Free adm.Top quality craftsand used clothing, flowers, baked goods, games etc. Lunch/supper served. Auction at 7.
Nov. 18	Organ concert by Jonathan Oldengarm, Benton Baptist Church, **Kitchener,** Ont. 7:30 p.m. Free adm. Program includes favorite organ works & variations on familiar hymns. Details: call 519-338-3214.
Dec. 9	Benefit Concert Timothy Chr. School, **Rexdale,** Ont. Choir & orchestra ARCADY. See ad this issue.
Dec. 17	Dutch Service, Ancaster CRC, 70 Garner Rd. (Hwy. 53) E., **Ancaster,** Ont. 3 p.m., Rev. Koops preaching.

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Benefit Concert for Timothy Christian School, Rexdale, ON
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The choir and orchestra **ARCADY**, under the direction of Ron Beckett, performs ***Handel's Messiah*** on period instruments. Saturday, Dec. 9, at 7:30 PM. Covenant Reformed Church, 259 Albion Road, Etobicoke. Tickets $15 Adult and $10 Seniors/Students. For tickets and info: call **Te Deum Music (416) 245-3940** or visit **www. Tedeummusic.com.**
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News

Ontario government aims to protect crime victims

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — The Ontario government is planning to help out victims of crime, especially domestic violence, with new protective legislation. Gertie Pool, a crime victim advocate in Abbotsford, B.C., is "totally elated" with the proposals, but Rick Prashaw, of the Ottawa-based Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC), sees them as "a minimal response to the needs of victims."

COURTESY GERTIE POOL

Victim's Rights Movement chair Gertie Pool.

Office for crime victims

In late September, Ontario's Attorney General, Jim Flaherty, introduced legislation to create a permanent Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), to give victims a stronger voice in the justice system. According to the Ministry of the Attorney General, the office would consult with victims and provide advice to government on victims' issues such as:

- the use of the Victim's Justice Fund (which has been budgeted $50 million over the past few years);
- research, information and education on victimization and its prevention, by establishing a resource centre and online library, and providing advice on training for victims, service providers and justice officials;
- ways to ensure that the Victims' Bill of Rights is respected, by consulting and liaising with victims;
- developing provincial standards for the delivery of services to victims.

Assembly line of justice

"This legislation is one more step our government is taking to help victims get the support and services they need," says Attorney General Flaherty. "A permanent Office for Victims of Crime would ensure that the principles set out in the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected and that victims receive quality services wherever they live in Ontario."

The OVC was actually started in November 1998, and was mandated to consult with service providers to assess the state of victim services in Ontario. The new legislation would make the office permanent, and expand its services, as mentioned above. A budget of $1 million has already been committed to the office.

Rick Prashaw says the OVC is "a minimal response to the needs of victims." But he adds, "The office can hopefully help victims through the labyrinth" — which is how he describes the confusing system of help available to victims.

"There's this assembly line of justice," Prashaw explains. "All these parts of the system want a piece of the victim." Some, for instance, are "interested in the victim from the investigation or trial perspective."

There are many types of crime victims, Prashaw points out. "Will this office address the wide range of victims out there? Hopefully ... the office can serve as a one-stop place for the victim to deal with their case."

Compassion for victims

Gertie Pool is more hopeful about the OVC. "I'm totally elated with the government's actions in Ontario," she says. "This is exactly what you need for crime victims.... It shows compassion, kindness, and it shows we care for our victims."

This is in sharp contrast with the situation for crime victims in B.C., she asserts. "Right now, crime victims here in B.C. are dealt the toughest blow you can get.... Victims here in B.C. have precious little help in times of need." But with such an office, "if a person becomes victimized, they know where to go for help," suggests Pool.

As an advocate for justice reforms in B.C., Pool says that many crime victims do not know where to find help. Many will call the police, but often the police won't tell them where to go for further help, she asserts. In fact, she says, a 1993 Statistics Canada survey showed that 58 per cent of crime victims in B.C. "didn't even bother reporting their victimization to the police."

"Victims should receive quality service, not delayed service," she asserts.

Domestic violence not tolerated

Flaherty and his department have also proposed a new Domestic Violence Protection Act (DVPA), which Flaherty says "would send a clear signal that domestic violence is a serious crime and will not be tolerated in Ontario.... We would also be the first province in Canada to expand the definition of domestic violence to include people in dating relationships."

The proposed Act would more broadly define domestic violence to include dating relationships, family members who reside together, and people who have been living together. All of these situation are not currently covered.

Victims would be able to obtain an intervention order more quickly, and these would be easier to enforce. The act would also expand counselling for alleged abusers to help prevent further violence.

"Clearly, domestic violence is most serious. There are women at great risk," stresses Prashaw. "Domestic violence is very complex. There have to be tools given for justice professionals to intervene.... The question of the woman's health and safety are Number One."

Driving a wedge

But he warns there is a danger in rushing to criminalize situations and people. Some women who have been abused want a relationship to continue. The danger of criminalizing is that it "can drive a wedge in family relationships.... Some women have reported they didn't want the relationship to end, [but the system] ended it permanently."

Prashaw asks: "Is the criminal justice system the only response?" CCJC has proposed the use of restorative justice for domestic violence cases, explains Prashaw. But he admits, "There has to be great caution in the use of restorative justice interventions in domestic violence."

Restorative justice is "an absolute values approach," says Prashaw, "which suggests crime is harm which is done to one another, and restorative justice looks at healing that harm."

Pool views the proposed DVPA as "absolutely great." A big problem with domestic violence court cases, she observes, is that judges rarely hand out maximum sentences but often give out minimal ones. "The offenders are just laughing at the system," she says. "They know the judges will never follow up. Court orders here are not adhered to. More protection for victims of domestic violence sounds like music to my ears."

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News Digest

Witches protest Halloween show

DUNBAR, West Va. — A Baptist Halloween production in a city park had West Virginia witches frightened for their First Amendment rights, Religion Today and The Associated Press reported. Wiccans Dave McCormick and Elise Adkins claim the First Baptist Church of Dunbar, West Virginia's "Haunted Hollow" violates the Constitution and have asked the American Civil Liberties Union to help stop the holiday display.

The 45-minute Haunted Hollow tour shows the perils of sin, said First Baptist's associate minister, Mark Jarrell. Vignettes include a laughing, taunting Satan in hell, a drunken teen regaining consciousness at the scene of a car crash he caused, and a youth overdosing at a party.

Violence and doves

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — You might be forgiven for missing the "Christian message" that director John Woo says is woven throughout his highly violent movies, such as *Broken Arrow* and *The Killer*.

Woo says the frequent use of doves in his violent movies is intended to convey a religious message, reports *ChristianWeek*. "I love doves. I am a Christian," says Woo. "Doves represent the purity of love, beauty. They're spiritual. Also the dove is a messenger between people and God."

But given Woo's ongoing penchant for depicting blow-by-blow violence and gunplay, perhaps clay pigeons would be more appropriate.

The Polynesian Wave

TORONTO – Ancient Polynesian navigators really knew their waves, according to the *Globe and Mail*. "By any measure, the oceanic explorations of the Polynesians are one of the most remarkable achievements of human history," writes Chris Stevenson in the *Journal of the Earthwatch Institute*. "An experienced Polynesian navigator could recognize and distinguish dozens of different kinds of waves. Most remarkably, they could distinguish something they called 'land waves,' which are waves caused by water hitting an island and being reflected back out to sea. The best navigators can feel these waves hundreds of kilometres away and can tell from them in which direction the land lies."